the weekly
Standard
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RUDY GIULIANI, DISCIPLINARIAN
MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Is America ready for a CEO in the White House?

FRED BARNES on Mitt Romney

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RAISING TAXES WON'T GENERATE THE ENERGY SHE'LL NEED

Most Americans agree energy security is a top national priority, because they want to ensure their families' quality of life now and into the future. So why do some in Congress want to raise taxes on the development of oil and natural gas resources?

History shows that changing the rules by raising energy taxes has serious consequences. After Congress levied a "windfall profits" tax in the 1980s, its own non-partisan Congressional Research Service determined this tax diverted $79 billion from domestic energy investment, reduced U.S. oil production by as much as 1.26 billion barrels and increased oil imports.

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A Moral Core for U.S. Foreign Policy

Why American policy must promote American values abroad

Some have claimed—and indeed the 2002 National Security Strategy and other statements of President Bush flirt with—that U.S. values and interests are closely aligned or can be so. Such an argument effectively dodges the question of which should take precedence. And indeed, it may be that "failed states" are something the United States should take action to prevent because of the potential for danger of no one is being in charge. We disagree on the relative magnitude of the danger; we agree, however, that U.S. action to prevent the failure of states is morally good. The point is that, without the moral frame of reference, one could imagine a debate about whether the collapse of a state into civil war, warlordism, and genocide is good or bad for the United States—and that such a debate would remain imaginary, because it can never occur in the real world.

—Derek Chollet and Tod Lindberg

Doing Justice to Zacarias Moussaoui

Neither a madman nor an aspiring martyr but an enemy

Moussaoui laid out numerous particular grounds for accusing the court-appointed defense lawyers of what he styled "criminal nonassistance," but the fundamental fact of his being at war with the United States was, as he made unmistakably clear, the single overriding reason for his refusing their representation. "What on earth is the problem for the jurors to know that this defense doesn't belong to me?" he exclaimed, in defending his attempts to alert them to this fact during jury selection. "You own everything. You are America—the defense, the judge, the attackers. These people are American. I'm al Qaeda. I'm a sworn enemy of you. You, you, you, you, for me you are enemy."

—John Rosenthal

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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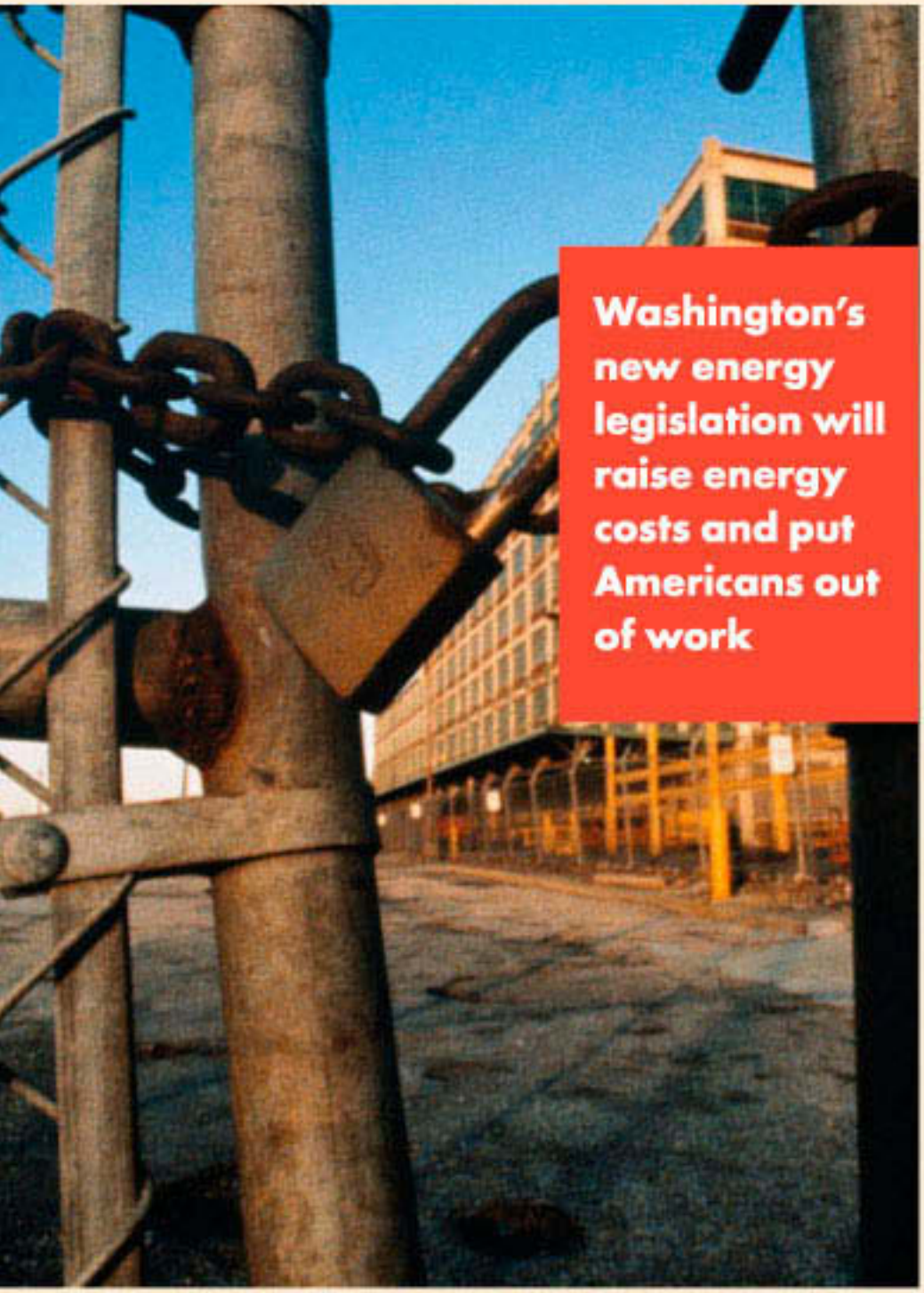
Can America's economy afford Congress' ~~energy~~ bill?

Layoffs, new taxes and cost spikes



Congress will soon consider sweeping new energy legislation that will raise energy taxes, cost American jobs and further limit the nation's access to domestic energy supplies.

The legislation's energy tax hikes and gasoline price controls will raise energy costs for American consumers, manufacturers and businesses – hurting economic growth and driving high-paying American jobs overseas. The legislation even reduces our ability to increase domestic oil and natural gas reserves here at home – increasing reliance on foreign sources of energy.

We need energy policies that support American jobs and increase supplies of energy from all sources to meet future generations' demand. Congress should reject these provisions of the energy bill and get to work on legislation to secure our energy future.

Reject Congress' Energy Bill

NAM National Association of Manufacturers

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Iraq Violence Down—This Is *Bad* News?

In a dispatch from Baghdad last week, Associated Press writer Robert Reid reported on the recent changes there. "Rocket and mortar attacks have fallen to their lowest level in nearly two years. Civilian deaths have dropped sharply since summer. Shoppers are venturing out, even in Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhoods. Iraq's capital is by no means yet safe. But the trend toward better security is indisputable."

Reid went on to cite several examples of continuing difficulties, but concluded that the conditions in Baghdad were a "vast improvement" over what they had been last year.

Earlier this month, ABC News national security correspondent Jonathan Karl filed a similar report from Iraq. "Nobody over here is anywhere near ready to declare victory, but the military statistics tell an unmistakable story. Violence in Iraq is down, and down considerably. Baghdad's marketplaces are slowly coming back to life, as violent attacks in Iraq have fallen to less than half of what they were a year ago. Until recently, the trends had been deadly and consistent, violence steadily increasing to an all-time high in June. Since then, however, attacks have fallen four straight months in every category."

That seems like unambiguous good news, no? Not if you're determined to look on the dark side. Charles Crain of *Time* magazine, for instance, allowed that "the security situation has improved dramatically in recent months," and then told his readers that this is a bad sign.

"With sectarian violence waning for the time being, the stage may be set for an escalation of the simmering battle among Shi'ites for control of southern Iraq. In Najaf, the spiritual center of Shi'ite Iraq, public displays of respect and cooperation mask an often violent competition between rival factions."

Which is perhaps technically true. In Washington, too, public displays of respect and cooperation mask an often bitter hatred between rival factions (witness the custom of senators referring to each other as "distinguished gentlemen"). But the stage in Iraq may also be set for political reconciliation on the local level. Or, the stage may be set for a further reduction in violence. Who knows?

Not Crain. His supporting evidence consists of a couple of quotes from concerned Iraqis. Says one man: "If the people in charge of security are serious—not just for Najaf but for all of Iraq—they have to educate their followers [about] how to respect the law." (The Scrapbook confesses to having had similar though unprintable thoughts just this morning about the District of Columbia police, when we were almost T-boned in an intersection by a squad car running a red light.)

If Crain hasn't quite substantiated his sense that civil war is just about inevitable, that's okay: The headline does all the heavy lifting for him: "Waiting for a Shi'ite Civil War."

It occurs to us that the stage may be set for a diminution in circulation at *Time*. ♦

Marion Barry and the *Washington Post*

When a proper history of Washington, D.C., municipal politics is written, the rise and fall and rise of Marion Shepilov Barry Jr.—from street protester, to school board member, to city council chairman, to mayor, to crack addict, to federal prisoner, to city council member again—will be impossible to account for without a description of the tutelary role played in his career by the *Washington Post*. The paper's owners and editors effectively thrust leadership of the nation's capital upon Barry in the 1970s. And ever since, as the paper has covered Barry's degradation and numerous scrapes with the law, it has always done so with the utmost delicacy and tact—even deference.

So you can imagine our surprise when we learned last week that one of the *Post*'s esteemed contributors had finally unloaded on Barry: Music critic Tim Page wrote to Barry aide Andre Johnson the following delicious email "after receiving an unsolicited press release about the former mayor's views on Greater Southeast Community Hospital":

> Must we hear about it every time this crack addict attempts to rehabilitate himself with some new—and typically half-witted—political grandstanding? I'd be grateful if you would take me off your mailing list. I cannot think of anything the useless Marion Barry could do that would interest me in the slightest, up to and including overdose.

Feel free to add your private cheers to those of thousands of *Post* subscribers who have been waiting in vain for a quarter century or more to hear the paper comment openly on the emperor's new crackpipe. But wait until you hear what Paul Harvey would call the rest of the story.

Page's email only saw the light of day because Barry publicized it and called for his firing. The *Post* didn't can Page, but in all other respects seems to have truckled to Barry, as it is well practiced

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of February 15, 1999)

in doing. Editor Len Downie called Page's email "a terrible mistake." Page was trotted out for a public act of contrition: "It's the stupidest thing I've done in 30 years in journalism," he said. "I hope people won't judge me on this one explosion."

Barry said Page's email to his flack showed that "around the nation, it's almost open season on black people." He called on the paper to send "a signal to the whole world" that the paper "won't tolerate this kind of lowlife activity." That's not how we would describe Page's note, but we defer to Barry as the greater expert on "lowlife activity." ♦

Defending Karen Hughes

The good folks at the Middle East Media Research Institute, who provide invaluable translations of newspaper articles and TV broadcasts from the Arabic-speaking world, send along an eloquent defense of President Bush's longtime aide Karen Hughes, whose public diplomacy work didn't always get a lot of respect, including in these pages. The witness for the defense is Omran Salam, editor of an Arabic reformist website www.aafaq.org. His November 2 editorial was headlined "The Distortion of the Image of the U.S. Has Become a Political Objective for Arab Governments in Their Struggle for Survival." Some excerpts:

"It was not destined for that Hughes would succeed in 'winning the hearts and minds of the Arabs' in all circumstances, and this has nothing to do with her skills or her competence. . . .

"The distorted image of the United States in the Arab world . . . is not due to lack of information about the motives and nature of American foreign policy, and not because Arab citizens have insufficient information about American life, or the laws or institutions of the United States.

"The residents of the Arab world do not live on another planet, and they are not isolated from the revolution of rapid communication, technology, and the Internet, where anyone can push a button and get the information he wants. Many Arabs have visited the United States or have a relatives or friends living in America.

"The real reason is that the distortion of the image of the United States has become a political objective for Arab governments in their struggle for survival. . . . Those conducting this smear campaign are primarily autocratic Arab regimes, as represented by Ministries of Information. . . .

"They poisoned the views and ideas in the Arab world, and filled the minds of the people with such extraordinary superstitions, fantasies and conspiracy theories, beginning with the accusation that the CIA and the Jews masterminded the attacks of September 11 and not ending with the 'Crusader war' that President George Bush has declared on the Islamic world."

Read the whole thing, as they say. It can be found at www.memri.org. ♦

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Casual

Pensacola Blues

The Blue Angels—the Navy's demonstration team, the guys behind those six shiny blue fighter jets that fly in formation at air shows and do heart-stopping loop-de-loops at 500 miles an hour—have a peculiar shape to their year.

They spend the winter training in the big, empty skies of the California desert, down near Mexico. That's not just the six pilots, by the way, but the entire squadron that decamps to El Centro to perfect its teamwork: 16 officers and over 100 enlisted men and women, who maintain the planes, plan the shows, and perform a thousand other essential functions.

Then from March into November they're on the road, performing almost every weekend. Wherever they go, they visit schools and hospitals as well as flying for the public some 60 times all over the country. Their mission—the purpose for which we taxpayers support them—is recruitment.

In mid-summer the pilots add to this routine the process of selecting three new pilots (and several other officers). It's the Blues themselves who interview the eight or ten finalists, then agree which three will succeed the senior three of them. In September, the new guys start shadowing the team, following them to air shows, observing before they ever put on the blue flight suit to actually perform.

The last show of the season is at the team's home base in Pensacola. And that night there's a party at a club downtown. Former Blues come back for the occasion, and families and close friends are invited. There's a cash bar, a buffet dinner, then a simple ceremony. The commander of the team—who flies the lead jet—introduces his teammates, with their wives in the case of married members. One by one, they join him in the spotlight on a tiny stage. After applause, they go sit down, and the commander introduces the team for the coming year, made up half of old guys, half of new.

At the party two years ago, when my son Tom was one of the new guys, we were still delirious with the excitement of his having been selected. He and we were outsiders being inducted into a special world.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

After the party, my husband and I went to our hotel, but the celebration continued back at the house Tom was sharing with two other single new guys, Kevin and Russ. When the festivities wound down, we learned later, Kevin disappeared upstairs. He came down resplendent in his sharp blue flight suit. Tom went upstairs and changed into his blue flight suit too. Then Russ came down—in full Elvis regalia.

Before we knew it, Christmas had come and gone, and the Blues were heading out to El Centro. Each winter, the new guys have to learn the moves, and build up enough strength in their right arm to pull against 40 pounds of pressure on the control stick, through shows that last three quarters of an hour. They also have to master the physical techniques that allow them to pull Gs without wearing the usual pressure suit, too bulky for their precision flying.

Once last year's season began, we got to see the team fly twice, at Andrews Air Force Base and on Nantucket, on a clear, bright day with the sun glinting off the jets and the sea.

Tom's second winter at El Centro, he was the training officer. This time the commander was new, so the senior guys taught their boss. During the 2007 season we watched the Blues perform for the Naval Academy's graduation, then again in Brunswick, Maine, as well as in the finale in Pensacola just the other day. It was Tom's last show before, as a friend put it, "hanging up his halo."

Another friend who's shared the vicarious thrill of Tom's career exclaimed, "It's like being in the NFL!" Well, sort of—without the money and without the personal celebrity, and with the military ethic of sacrifice. Blues get the same pay they would in any squadron—and they get two extra years tacked onto their commitment to the Navy for the privilege of serving.

The team dedicated that final performance to their beloved brother Kevin Davis, killed in a crash during a show in South Carolina last spring. They ended the demo with the starkly moving "missing man" formation. As the six-plane delta flies slowly overhead, one jet breaks away and disappears straight up into the sky.

At night, at the party downtown, talking once again with Tom's wonderful teammates and friends, and with Kevin's parents and brothers whom we first met two years ago, we realized that in a sense we too had become old timers, part of the Blues' extended family, connected for life.

Claudia Anderson

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The world is growing by more than 70 million people a year.

So is that a problem, or a solution?

With our planet's population continuing to increase, and the quality of life for millions in the developing world improving daily, our demand for energy is also growing. And to meet everyone's needs 25 years from now may take 50% more energy than we use today.

Finding and developing all the fuel and power we need for our homes, businesses and vehicles, while protecting the environment, could be one of the greatest challenges our generation will face.

The key to ensuring success is found in the same place that created this need: humanity itself. When the unique spirit we all possess is allowed to flourish, mankind has proven its ability to take on, and overcome, any issue. It's a spirit of hard work, ingenuity, drive, courage and no small measure of commitment. To success, to each other, to the planet.

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the weekly Standard

Not-So-Great Generation

Q: If the World War II generation was the "greatest generation," what is the Vietnam War generation?
A: I don't think the full judgment of history is in yet. There is certainly greatness in the '60s generation. They changed our attitudes about race in America, which was long overdue.
—*Tom Brokaw, interviewed in the November 19* U. S. News & World Report, *on his new book,* Boom! Voices of the Sixties.

Whoa! The '60s generation changed our attitudes about race in America? Rosa Parks, Bayard Rustin, and Martin Luther King Jr.—were they from the Vietnam war generation? Earl Warren, Lyndon Baines Johnson, and Hubert Humphrey? For that matter, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, murdered on June 21, 1964, in Mississippi? None of these was a member of the "'60s generation." None was a boomer.

There really was greatness in the "greatest generation." It fought and won World War II, then came home to achieve widespread prosperity and overcome segregation while seeing the Cold War through to a successful conclusion. But the greatest generation had one flaw, its greatest flaw, you might say: It begat the baby boomers.

The most prominent of the boomers spent their youth scorning those of their compatriots who fought communism, while moralizing and posturing at no cost to themselves. They went on to enjoy the benefits of their parents' labors, sacrificed little, and produced nothing particularly notable. But the boomers were unparalleled when it came to self-glorification, a talent they began developing as teenagers and have continued to improve up to this day. They were also good at bamboozling their parents, and members of the "silent generation" like Tom Brokaw, to be overly deferential to them—even to the point of giving them credit for things they didn't do.

Now the first boomers are applying for Social Security. Their time is passing—without eliciting any discernible consternation among their successors. It's not that every last one is unworthy. But for each David Petraeus or Ray Odierno (two very impressive members), there are countless posturers and blowhards who have received wildly disproportionate attention. We've had two boomer presidents now, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. They followed eight presidents whose lives were more or less defined by the experience of World War II, or the Cold War: Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush. (Carter is the exception that proves the rule—a bit young to be defined by World War II, he turned out to be a kind of baby boomer *avant la lettre*.) With all due respect to Clinton's intelligence and Bush's determination—it's hard to make the case that boomer presidents were an improvement. (And some of the most impressive characters in the Clinton and Bush administrations—Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, Vice President Dick Cheney, to name two—weren't boomers.)

The boomer urge for self-glorification is still going strong. In its latest issue, *Newsweek* celebrates "1968: The Year That Made Us Who We Are." Recently Hillary Clinton spoke at Wellesley reliving the glory days of her "experiment in human living" 1969 commencement speech. For her reprise, she received mostly fawning coverage, in accord with the how-wonderful-our-kids-are coverage her original remarks received four decades ago. But rereading that fatuous oration today makes one think that the romance of the '60s must surely fade.

Maybe we'll even see this in the 2008 presidential election. Maybe the American public will decide two boomer presidents are enough. The Republicans will either nominate a pre-boomer (John McCain, Rudy Giuliani, Fred Thompson) or an anti-boomer (the square Mitt Romney or the preacher Mike Huckabee). As for the Democrats, they can pick from two quintessential boomers—Hillary Clinton and John Edwards—or go for Barack Obama, barely on the edge of boomer-dom (Obama was born in 1961) but really a post-boomer.

America's hopes for the future rest mostly with the 9/11 generation. Despite their unfortunate propensity so far to vote Democratic, these young men and women will, I believe, turn out to be far more impressive than we boomers who begat them. It would of course be a fitting fate, after all the soaring rhetoric about the boomers, if they turned out to be basically a parenthesis. They may go down in history as occupying space between the generation that won World War II and presided over a relatively successful second-half of the twentieth century, and the 9/11 generation that will deal with the threats the boomers neglected during that quintessential boomer decade, the '90s. It is the 9/11 generation that will have to construct and maintain a new American century. The best we boomers can do now is help them get started on the job. Meanwhile, the experience of the boomers should hearten us: America is such a great country that it will end up surviving even a not-so-great generation.

—*William Kristol*

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James Blake Miller

The Last Talking Point of the Left

The vet as victim.

BY DEAN BARNETT

To celebrate Veterans Day, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a two-part story on James Blake Miller, the battle-exhausted soldier in the iconic picture of the Battle of Falluja in November 2004. The photograph caught the 20-year-old Blake caked with blood and soot as a cigarette dangled from his mouth. He looked young, but also prematurely old. To many, the picture represents the modern American fighting man—resolute, determined, and much older than his years.

Today, Miller is home from Iraq and suffering from a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder. His is a heartbreaking saga, and the *Times*'s lengthy story detailed the efforts of Luis Sinco (the *Times* staff photographer who took the photo) to help him. Near the end of the story, Sinco quotes Miller's 21-year-old brother saying to him, "I'm glad I didn't join the Marines. I got a nice house, a wife and twin baby daughters, and I drive a Durango that's used but damn near new. You're divorced, drive a beat-up pickup and live in a trailer." His brother said that the returned soldier's "head is screwed up."

The *Boston Globe* celebrated Veterans Day with an editorial titled "When Johnny Comes Home… Less." Citing a National Alliance to End Homelessness study, the *Globe* stated that over the course of a year, half-a-million veterans go homeless. (A subsequent correction dropped this number to 337,000.) The *Globe* proceeded to expose the grim facts that "Veterans are at risk. Many grapple with traumatic brain injuries, the loss of limbs, post-traumatic stress disorder, and mental illness. Some need to find jobs and housing."

These are important stories, and shouldn't be ignored, but it is also hard to ignore the political agenda at work here. Individual tales of heroism don't interest papers like the *Times* and the *Globe*; individual tragedies do. Portraying veterans as lost souls is a narrative that is politically convenient.

I recently exchanged emails with a colonel in the California National Guard—an attorney when not on active duty—about Bruce Springsteen's new song "Gypsy Biker." The song portrays Iraq war veterans as gullible dupes who shed their blood while "the speculators made their money," and the colonel wrote:

> It's this portrayal of vets as burnt-out losers with nowhere to go but out on the open road that gets me. I was in court today, a vet, arguing a million-dollar case, in front of a judge who was also a vet. Vets aren't burned out losers—we're leaders. For every vet with problems—and they certainly exist, though I would guess in percentages far below that of the comparable civilian population—there are dozens of vets out there building businesses, raising families, and leading communities. Many give up weekends and vacations to stay in the Guard and Reserve. But I guess those guys aren't cool enough or useful enough.
>
> The stereotypical vet is the burned-out homeless guy with a torn old green field jacket. I say it should be the dad dropping his little girl off at preschool before he goes to the business he built from nothing while fielding phone calls from his Guard unit's full-time staff and driving a car with a trunk full of military gear so that, when the next earthquake or riot hits, he can go out and protect his community—*again*.

Although the colonel was speaking specifically of Springsteen, he might as well have been talking about the entire liberal establishment. CBS News ran a feature story

Dean Barnett is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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last week that focused on a purported epidemic of suicides among Iraq war veterans. But CBS's report didn't take into account the age of the vets who had committed suicide (they're young) or their sex (they're predominantly male). By comparing them to the general population rather than their peer group, CBS was comparing apples to oranges; the suicide rate among vets in fact parallels that of their civilian peer groups. CBS jumped at a story that supported its agenda on the war.

Portraying veterans as victims dates back to the Vietnam era—like so many of the new left's philosophical guideposts. But the Vets-as-Victims theme has recently acquired political urgency. As the facts in Iraq have changed, it's gotten harder to plausibly maintain that the war is a nightmare without end. Iraqi civilian casualties, as documented by the liberal website Icasualties.org, dropped from a pre-surge high of 3,389 per month to 752 in September and 565 in October. November is on pace to have fewer than 500 Iraqi civilian casualties. American military casualties continue to decline. This progress hasn't come without sacrifice, achievement, and heroics. But journalists are mostly indifferent to these aspects of the veterans' experience because they don't square with the narrative of soldiers-as-victims.

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It's all well and good for the left to stamp its collective foot and insist that success in Iraq doesn't matter, that nothing can wash away George W. Bush's original sin even though Bush won't be on the ballot in 2008. But progress in Iraq makes the issue recede in the public's mind. In January 2007, a Pew poll showed 55 percent of Americans viewed Iraq as "the first news story that comes to mind." In a Pew poll conducted last week that number had dropped to *16 percent*.

Last week, Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi launched their 41st attempt to constrain the war effort by limiting funds. They're no longer talking about Iraq as a disaster but focusing on how expensive the war effort is. The entire Democratic party power structure and its preferred intellectual construct profess a strange indifference to whether or not we succeed in Iraq. Back in 2005, the party wedded itself, for better or for worse, to the unyielding notion that the Iraq war is a failure. With the picture improving, and the election still a year away, they are running out of talking points. ♦

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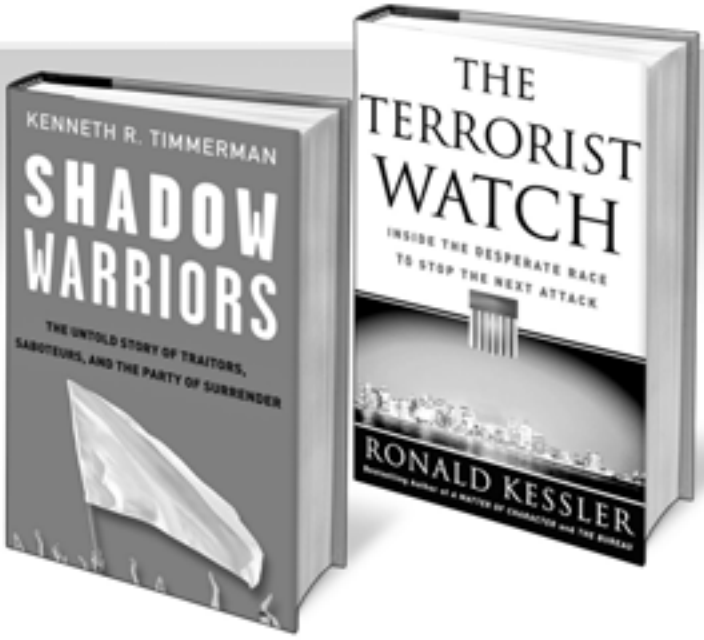

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Two Americas, Two Hollywoods

For once, the Democrats are conflicted about a labor dispute. BY JONATHAN V. LAST

The Hollywood writers' strike has placed the Democratic frontrunners in something of a bind, forcing them to choose between unions and the entertainment industry executives who are some of their most important big-money contributors. The responses of Senators Clinton, Obama, and Edwards have been revealing.

A strike has long been in the offing. The two unions that make up the Writers Guild of America voted overwhelmingly (by over 90 percent of their 12,000 members) to authorize a walkout on October 18. Their main point of conflict with the Alliance of Motion Pictures and Television Producers (which bargains on behalf of the movie and TV studios) was the royalties associated with downstream revenue.

Profits from computer downloads of movies and TV shows are the most contentious issue. Currently, content is distributed on the Internet in two ways: Some movies and TV shows are purchased and downloaded through services such as iTunes or Amazon Unbox; in these cases the writers get a negligible portion of the take (a third of a cent for every dollar of profit). Alternatively, studios allow viewers to stream TV shows (not movies, yet) from their websites. The studios sell advertising within these streams, but have wiggled around having to share this revenue with writers by labeling the streams "promotions" rather than "broadcasts." This prevents writers from getting any share at all of the profits. The Writers Guild strike is, at heart, an attempt by writers to claim a small sliver of these two pies. Their position is not unreasonable.

The strike was called on November 5. Within hours, the three top Democratic hopefuls released statements of support. Hillary Clinton's two-sentence statement said, "I support the Writers Guild's pursuit of a fair contract that pays them for their work in all mediums." It then urged the parties to resume bargaining.

Hey, hey, whaddaya say: We can't live on 200K.

REUTERS / MARIO ANZUONI

John Edwards went a bit further, contributing three sentences to the cause. Characteristically, he noted his own long history of strike support: "As someone who has walked picket lines with workers all across America and as a strong believer in collective bargaining, I hope that both sides are able to quickly reach a just settlement."

Barack Obama went furthest in his own short statement. "I stand with the writers," he declared. "The Guild's demand is a test of whether corporate media corporations [oops] are going to give writers a fair share of the wealth their work creates or continue concentrating profits in the hands of their executives." It wasn't, perhaps, everything the Writers Guild might have hoped for, but it was better than the union got from Chris Dodd, Joe Biden, or Dennis Kucinich—none of whom as of Friday, November 16, had pronounced on the strike. (Bill Richardson issued the most substantive, and thoughtful, support of the lot.)

After their brief statements, Clinton and Obama fell silent. When asked whether any further demonstration of support for the strike was planned, the Clinton campaign simply re-emailed its original statement of quasi-solidarity. When asked the same question, the Obama campaign did not respond. After staying quiet for almost two weeks, Edwards attended a rally for the WGA at the NBC picket lines in Burbank last Friday. Clinton was scheduled to make a campaign stop in Los Angeles last Saturday but as of Friday had no public plans to do any events in support of the union.

Why such tepid support for the most significant union action likely before November 2008? The answer is that the writers' strike puts Democrats in a tight spot. (So tight that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office will only say that she has no plans to say anything whatsoever about the strike.)

On the one hand, you would expect Democrats to rally to the side of any union, particularly a Hollywood union—particularly a Hollywood union with a legitimate gripe against giant corporate media conglomerates. On the other hand, the management in Hollywood has given Clinton, Obama, and to a lesser extent, Edwards, barrels of money.

Paramount Pictures chairman and CEO Brad Grey has given the maximum to Clinton (as well as to Dodd, McCain, and Giuliani, which makes him a reactionary by Hollywood standards). The Sony Corporation's chairman, Howard Stringer, has also maxed out his contributions to Clinton. Sony's film division chairman, Amy Pascal, gave the max to Obama,

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as did her vice chairman, Yair Landau.

Richard Cook, chairman of Walt Disney Studios, gave to both Clinton and Obama; Oren Aviv, president of Disney's film production, maxed out to Clinton alone. At Warner Brothers, both the president and the chairman gave to Hillary and Obama, with the president, Alan Horn, also throwing money at Edwards. New Line's CEO, Bob Shaye, maxed out his contributions to all three.

At DreamWorks, David Geffen gave to Obama and Edwards, while Jeffrey Katzenberg gave to those two, plus Hillary. Viacom's Sumner Redstone and the Weinstein Company's Harvey Weinstein gave exclusively to Clinton. There are more examples—many, many more—and when you look down the list you see that nearly every powerful executive in the industry, from Peter Chernin and Kevin Reilly at Fox to Robert Wright at NBC/Universal to Nancy Reiss Tellem at CBS, has been giving to one or more of the big three Democrats.

That may partly explain the candidates' reticence to stump for the Writers Guild the way they might have stumped for, say, the UAW. Another explanation may be that the writers are part of the overclass in the Democrats' vision of the "two Americas." In film, writers are guaranteed a minimum of $106,000 for a screenplay; in TV, networks must pay at least $20,956 for a 22-minute sitcom script and $30,823 for a 44-minute show. (In practice, those numbers are usually doubled since the writer gets a large payoff for the first rerun.) The studios and networks report that the average working writer makes $200,000 a year; the average worker in Los Angeles County makes $52,572.

But if the Democratic notion of "two Americas" is cloying, there are, without question, two Hollywoods. And in the alternative universe of Hollywood, the writers really are the downtrodden.

In the entertainment industry, writing is a sometime thing, with about half of Writers Guild members unemployed at any given time. Because Hollywood writing is rarely steady—movie projects take a long time to complete, but then are finished; TV shows are often canceled—writers rely on residuals to give them some income stability. And Hollywood certainly isn't averse to giving out residuals. A recent study of the film industry by Global Media Intelligence suggested that studios give away as much as 25 percent of a film's profits in residual payments. Last year, that amounted to $3 billion in after-release payouts. From this river of cash, writers received only $121 million. By contrast, an actor or director can receive residual payouts anywhere between $20 million and $70 million for a single picture.

The entire situation is richly ironic: Democrats, corrupted by big-corporate money, barely standing by a union composed of liberal, upper-middle-class scribblers. But the final irony is that the writers' strike presents an actual instance of giant income disparity and economic unfairness. And the Democrats are, for the most part, keeping quiet about it. ♦

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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People of the Book

The British Library makes nice at the expense of scholarship. BY JOE LOCONTE

London

Earlier this year the British Library hosted a lavish exhibition of the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It was an effort designed to ease simmering religious tensions in the United Kingdom. The planners deliberately chose not to cluster the works on display in separate "faith zones," explained Graham Shaw, the library's lead curator, but instead "to show these wonderful manuscripts side by side and demonstrate how much we share." Despite these good intentions, the exhibition repeatedly managed to distort the history and beliefs of the three religions in ways that make interfaith dialogue not easier but more difficult.

Entitled "Sacred: Books of the Three Faiths," the show was billed as "the world's greatest collection of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim holy books." With its more than 150 manuscripts and printed works from several continents and spanning more than 1,500 years, it wasn't too large a boast.

There was a stunningly beautiful illuminated Koran from Mosul, in what is now Iraq, dated 1310, a reminder of the artistic heights of Islamic culture. From Faro, Portugal, came the only surviving copy of the first book ever printed in that country—the Pentateuch. And there was a Tyndale Bible (1526), one of only three copies of this English translation known to have escaped its public burning. (William Tyndale himself was executed for heresy, though his translation would become the basis for the King James Version.)

The most popular exhibition in the history of the British Library, "Sacred" drew over 200,000 visitors during its April to September run. It received rave reviews from the British and international press, and its success no doubt will magnify its influence. Already, a spinoff educational program, "Sacred on Location," is touring museums and libraries in Britain. Exhibitions elsewhere—the Taft Museum of Art in Cincinnati has a program on "spirituality and art" due to open early next year—may take some inspiration from the London show. Planners of future exhibitions, however, will do well to avoid the confusions and distortions of the original.

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The problem began with the exhibition panels, meant to guide the uninitiated. One of them read, "Each succeeding religion acknowledges the texts of those preceding and draws a great deal from them. The Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible and Qur'an therefore form one linked textual tradition."

These are puzzling claims. In what sense, for example, would a rabbi say the Torah was "linked" to the Koran? Certainly not in the sense of being a prologue for subsequent divine revelation. And Christians do not merely "acknowledge" the Hebrew Bible, they deem it holy scripture. By contrast, neither Jews nor Christians "acknowledge" the Koran as inspired or authoritative. Likewise, it is unhelpful to say that Muslims "draw a great deal" from the Bible without adding that they regard its text as tragically corrupted.

In some instances, the arrangement of diverse texts in a shared space was evocative—and misleading. In one display case sat a 14th-century manuscript of the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, discovered in Palestine and written in Arabic with an Islamic-style carpet page. Alongside it was a Koran, similarly designed and dated, from Egypt. The intent was apparently to suggest Christian cultural borrowing from Islam. "The exquisite adornment of this Christian manuscript," writes critic Yasmin Khan, was "heavily influenced by Middle Eastern culture in its decoration, script, and layout."

The claim is unexceptionable as far as it goes—unless influence over decoration, script, and layout is meant to imply influence over doctrine. But it misses the point. Christians had a strategic reason for packaging their scripture in culturally familiar forms: Because they regarded Jesus' message as intended for all people, Christians from the beginning sought ways to overcome cultural barriers in order to spread the faith.

The exhibition did acknowledge one consequence of this belief. "In Judaism and Islam there is only one language invested with sacred authority, Hebrew and Arabic respectively," a panel read. "In Christianity, the Scriptures have spiritual authority regardless of the language into which they are translated."

Sure enough, the Jewish texts on

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A Moroccan Koran from 1568

THE BRITISH LIBRARY

display were almost exclusively in Hebrew and Aramaic and the Islamic texts in Arabic, while the Christian texts were in Arabic, Armenian, Catalan, Coptic, English, Greek, Latin, Syriac, and more. Like Christianity, Islam is a universal religion; it calls for the conversion of every person. Unlike Christianity, it deems only Arabic to be the language of God. That is why Muslims the world over recite their prayers in Arabic—while Christians are busily translating the Bible into the most obscure tribal languages under the sun.

The program's catalogue, *Sacred*, a gorgeously illustrated 224-page volume (available from amazon.co.uk), sometimes adds to the confusion. It emphasizes, for example, the "literary transformation" that allegedly occurred in the texts of all three faiths. The overall impression—contested among scholars—is that a process of revision, manipulation, and distortion shaped the Bible and the Koran.

It is true that the authors of these sacred books and the scribes who copied them had certain audiences and objectives in mind as they went about their work. But it's presumptuous to assume, as the catalogue repeatedly does, that they had little interest in preserving the original integrity of the texts. The discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls, manuscripts from the first or second century B.C. discovered between 1946 and 1956 which included copies of the Hebrew scriptures, illustrates this bias. We're told, for example, that the complete text of the book of Isaiah found among the scrolls "shows over a thousand variations from the standard text" that is read today. But the remarkable fact, ignored by *Sacred*'s editors, is that the ancient scroll was identical to the text in the standard Hebrew Bible more than 95 percent of the time, and virtually none of the variations involved matters of doctrine.

An introductory essay by Karen Armstrong—a former nun turned bestselling religion author and a member of the controversial Jesus Seminar—typifies the problems with the exhibition, recycling tiresome stereotypes about religious belief.

The sacred texts are shot through with historical flaws, we learn, but nonetheless contain a remnant of spiritual truth. As Armstrong explains, believers are perplexed "when archaeologists prove that many of the Biblical narratives

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have no basis in fact." But she mentions no narratives that have been so discredited. Nor does she let on that archaeological discoveries have lent support to numerous events recorded in the Old and New Testaments—including artifacts displayed nearby in the British Museum. To cite a single example, a bronze coin minted in Ephesus in the first century A.D. shows the Roman emperor on one side and the Temple of Artemis, the favorite goddess of the city, on the other. The coin's image and Greek inscription match precisely those described in the New Testament book of Acts.

Toward the end of the exhibition, visitors were blandly instructed that after Muhammad's death, "Islam spread rapidly" and "expanded into the Iberian Peninsula." Unmentioned was the fact that this rapid early advance was inseparable from Islam's military campaigns—or that the early spread of Christianity occurred through preaching and persuasion, often met with persecution and martyrdom. More crudely still, Armstrong lumps some believers together with religious terrorists. "Christian fundamentalists prefer the vengeful book of Revelation," she writes, "rather than the Sermon on the Mount, while Muslim extremists emphasize those passages of the Qur'an that preach jihad, and ignore the far more numerous exhortations to forgiveness, kindness, courtesy, and tolerance."

An explicit aim of the exhibition was to overcome what its promoters called a "patent lack of charity" from religious believers on all sides. Certainly a little more charity is in order if people with conflicting ideologies are to move beyond mere toleration of one another. But jabs at the integrity of religious texts, the sanitizing of religious history, and caricatures of conservative believers all seem ill-designed to achieve that end. Indeed, a slippery narrative of religious unity is unlikely to inspire respect among competing faiths or help them live together amid their deepest differences. ♦

The Failed Madrid Verdicts

Why counterterrorism trials won't work in ordinary courts. BY KENNETH ANDERSON

The defendants sat in a glass cage at the national court in Madrid.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

On October 31, a Spanish court handed down verdicts in the trial of suspects in the March 11, 2004, terror attack on Madrid's Atocha train station that left 191 people dead. The Madrid bombings stand alongside the 2005 London bombings as the deadliest terrorist attacks in large Western cities since 9/11. The trials following on those attacks stand as important tests of the ability of Western legal systems to deter and prevent terror via ordinary criminal law mechanisms.

The results are not promising—not with respect to punishing terrorism, let alone deterring or preventing it. Spanish prosecutors were able to secure only three murder verdicts among the 28 defendants, many of whom, although not the actual bombers, were plainly implicated in planning and carrying out the attack. And the Spanish criminal justice system is far more accommodating to prosecutors than the American system. Given the overwhelming nature of the evidence available to objective observers as to the involvement of many of the accused, the failure to secure justice once again raises serious doubts about the adequacy of ordinary criminal trials for dealing with jihadist terrorists, whether in the United States or in Europe.

Many critics of the Bush administration have reached the opposite conclusion. Noting the absence of successful attacks in this country since 9/11, they conclude that this owes little to the government's counterterrorism efforts but instead means the actual terrorist threat has been greatly exaggerated, 9/11 notwithstanding. It is therefore time, they argue, to eliminate the Bush administration's extraordinary measures, such as military commissions, detentions at Guantánamo, or warrantless wiretap-

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ping, and to relocate counterterrorism within the ordinary criminal justice system. The only acceptable approach to terrorists, many highly credentialed experts maintain, is to charge them with crimes and try them, or let them go. This may be a heroically noble human rights policy, but ordinary citizens will be forgiven if they find it criminally negligent of public safety.

By happenstance, I was living in Spain with my family at the time of the Madrid bombings, on sabbatical studying, ironically, legal responses in Europe to terrorism. Reaction in Spain to the bombings was a curious mixture of fatalism and appeasement, publicly cast as stoic defiance ("terrorists will not change our way of life") but also exhibiting a measure of collectively sticking one's head in the sand and hoping the threat would just go away.

A consensus was quickly reached that the problem was not terrorism as such, but Spain's troops taking part in Bush's Iraq war. The Madrid attack had been quite deliberately timed to precede Spanish presidential elections by a few days. Spanish voters duly voted out Bush-supporting Prime Minister José María Aznar and replaced him with Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who promptly moved to pull Spanish troops from Iraq. This gesture, widely viewed as unconscionable appeasement in the United States, was equally widely applauded in Spain as prudently securing the country's safety. It was followed several weeks later, however, by the discovery of wires strung across the Seville-Madrid rail line in preparation for another bombing—casting doubt on the confident predictions of safety through appeasement and suggesting that terrorist aspirations were more ambitious than merely securing Spain's withdrawal from Iraq.

Although the bombers themselves, tracked down by security forces, blew themselves up in a barricaded apartment to avoid capture, police had gathered extensive evidence on their principally Moroccan organizers, planners, and controllers. Suspects were arrested, held in investigative detention, and finally—not until three years later—tried on charges including murder, supplying explosives, conspiracy, and membership in a terrorist organization. The sprawling trial went on for months in a courtroom in Madrid. In the process several suspects were released for lack of evidence. Were it not for provisions of Spanish law allowing mere membership in an organization to be a crime, Spanish justice would have had astonishingly little to show for 191 deaths and more than 2,000 wounded, a point clearly recognized by a less than satisfied Spanish public and families of the victims.

What went wrong for Spanish prosecutors? They had to rely on masses of circumstantial evidence, including crucial telephone conversations gathered in third countries such as Italy, which were subject to lengthy debate over translation, provenance, and reliability. None of the 28 confessed. Command and control, planning and coordination, although uncontroverted by serious security experts, nonetheless was too diffuse to satisfy the properly strict requirements of ordinary criminal justice in dealing with ordinary criminals. Fernando Reinares, until recently the Spanish government's senior counterterrorism adviser and now an expert at Spain's highly respected, nonpartisan Elcano Royal Institute, remarked that the trial judge did not admit "the extraordinary mass of circumstantial evidence" that is "crucial when you are trying members of a nebulous group of international terrorists."

Convictions were obtained on lesser charges, for most defendants, while others were acquitted for lack of evidence. These mixed convictions send the message to Western observers that justice was heroically impartial. If, instead, one accepts the reasonable assessment that most of the defendants were guilty (including guilty of the murder of 191 people), but that the legal system was incapable of showing it within its own highly cir-

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cumscribed terms, then the message to jihadist observers is that they can game the system. Crucial to that is keeping legal accountability for jihad within the strict terms of ordinary Western criminal justice, designed for ordinary criminals committing ordinary crimes—circumstances in which punishment is an important element of deterrence, and people do bad things for reasons of personal passion or gain, not for God and the promise of heaven.

Disturbingly, these failures for prosecutors occurred in a legal system far more flexible and prosecutor-friendly than the American system. Spain allows a judge to consider hearsay evidence, for example, and effectively whatever evidence the judge considers of adequately probative value. More remarkably, it is a system that allows incommunicado detention of suspects for up to 13 days—a shocking provision, by American standards. Moreover, the Spanish conception of pretrial detention is so loose as to begin to resemble administrative detention—most defendants had been held for years before they were finally tried. The Spanish criminal code permits mere membership in an organization deemed terrorist (rather than actual acts and participation) to be criminalized. It is highly unlikely that American prosecutors (despite what they sometimes naively say) could have done better, given an American criminal justice system that is far more generous to defendants.

So the Madrid verdicts stand as a warning that ordinary criminal justice is not necessarily capable either of ensuring public safety or even of doing justice in serious terrorism cases. Prime Minister Zapatero solemnly announced afterwards that "justice has been done," but he could not mean that in substance—only that the procedural rules of a judicial system gamed by the jihadists had been followed. The Elcano Royal Institute's Reinares remarked, more accurately, that Spanish courts would have to change their rules of evidence if the country was to defeat Islamic terrorism, because jihadist terrorism "leaves a different kind of footprint" that conventional criminal justice cannot adequately process.

Meanwhile, the debate in the United States comes down once again to this same question of whether ordinary criminal justice can keep Americans safe and bring real justice to those who, in fact, commit violent jihad. It is remarkable and dismaying that the argument has circled back yet again, for the evidence that it can, looking to Madrid, is no better now than it was when many of us thought the question had been definitively answered in the negative—on 9/11. ♦

The Bloom Is Off the Rose Revolution

Georgia's Saakashvili cracks down.

BY IRAKLY GEORGE ARESHIDZE

On November 7 Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili's carefully crafted image as a Western-style democrat was shattered when he twice used massive force to disband peaceful protests, injuring over 500 people.

Claiming that the opposition was working with Russia to overthrow his government, Saakashvili declared a 15-day state of emergency, banned private television stations from reporting the news, and shut down Georgia's most popular TV station, Imedi, which is managed and part-owned by News Corporation (parent company of THE WEEKLY STANDARD). When Western leaders condemned these moves, Saakashvili backpedaled, proposing a snap presidential election in January, then a week later firing his prime minister in a gesture that amounts to little more than a distraction.

The use of force was particularly ironic in that Saakashvili himself came to power four years ago through the celebrated Rose Revolution, a wave of street protests which then-President Eduard Shevardnadze refrained from crushing. It now appears that Saakashvili actually cares as much about political freedom as the strongmen leading Pakistan, Venezuela, and Russia.

Plainly, too, events in Georgia have dealt another blow to President Bush's democracy agenda—not because the president's noble goals are unworkable, but because he has failed to force the bureaucracies in Washington to implement policies that will actually advance them.

The Bush administration dispatched a deputy assistant secretary of state, Matt Bryza, to Tbilisi, where he did a good job of pressing for democratic elections and for the lifting of the state of emergency. Bryza also emphasized that "a cornerstone of democracy is that all TV stations should remain open" and pushed for putting Imedi back on the air.

Yet he also implicitly justified Saakashvili's move against Imedi: "I sense that the Georgian government is genuinely, genuinely concerned about what has been broadcast by Imedi TV at that time, that was inciting people to overthrow the government," Bryza was quoted as saying on November 13 on the U.S.-funded Georgian website Civil.ge. He expressed hope that in

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the future journalism would be "fully professional" and would "not involve calls for unconstitutional steps."

But the next day, a Georgian court stripped Imedi of its broadcast license, claiming that it had been "used as a major tool for organizing demonstrations."

Georgia's current crisis started in mid-September, when Saakashvili's former interior and defense minister, Irakly Okruashvili, accused Saakashvili of planning to kill Georgia's richest man, Badri Patarkatsishvili (who co-owns Imedi), and of hiding the truth behind the mysterious death of Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania in 2005.

Several opposition leaders seized the opportunity to form an anti-Saakashvili coalition. They set forth a number of demands: opposition representation on the electoral commissions; a more democratic allocation of parliamentary seats; and cancellation of the extension of parliament's term by six months. When the government failed to cooperate, the opposition brought between 50,000 and 70,000 people into the streets of Tbilisi on November 2, with financial support from Patarkatsishvili and prominent coverage on Imedi.

As protests progressed, these leaders—virtually all of whom had supported Saakashvili during the Rose Revolution—began to demand his resignation. While they claimed not to want another revolution, that would have been the effect of what they demanded.

They were right, of course, that Saakashvili rules Georgia with an iron fist. Upon taking office, he amended the constitution to dramatically increase presidential powers, creating a one-man autocracy. Nevertheless, it was unnecessary and unwise to demand his resignation. In its almost 16-year post-Soviet history, Georgia has never had a constitutional transition of power, and no leader has completed his full term in office. Ending Saakashvili's term early would have further undermined Georgia's chances of moving toward constitutional democracy.

Like the protest leaders, Saakashvili acted rashly, putting his own survival above the rule of law. Internationally, his image suffered irreparable damage. Domestically, he has lost much of his political legitimacy and support, and many now call him a dictator.

The Bush administration has supported Saakashvili, both politically and financially, since 2003. In February 2004, Bush called Saakashvili "a friend with whom we share values," and during a visit to Tbilisi in May 2005 he called Georgia a "beacon of liberty." The administration has much to lose if the situation continues to spiral downward.

Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili

REUTERS / IRAKLI GEDENIDZE

But it has much to gain by using its influence in Georgia to preserve the country's democratic opening. Early presidential elections and the lifting of the state of emergency on November 16 are not enough. Likewise, while a serious election-monitoring effort including foreign observers, exit polls, and Parallel Voter Tabulations is all important and the United States should help bring it about, it is insufficient. Even a perfect balloting process will be meaningless if the opposition is prevented from mounting a serious campaign.

The United States can push the Georgian government to deal fairly with those accused of seeking the overthrow of the government with Russian help—either put them on trial or dismiss the charges—and to punish those in the government who used unjust force against the demonstrators.

Washington can also promote a level playing field in both the presidential and later the parliamentary elections. The Georgian government's proposals for democratizing the membership of electoral commissions and the allocation of parliamentary seats are good first steps. But Saakashvili could still use state resources to advance his candidacy—dispensing welfare benefits to buy votes, for example—and intimidate the opposition. Mounting a credible campaign is impossible without money. Many leading businessmen support the opposition, but they fear—with good reason—that the state will go after their businesses if they act on their beliefs.

Most important, Imedi must be allowed back on the air. Surveys say that the station is the primary source of news for more than half the public. Because it is administered and part-owned by a U.S. conglomerate, it is the least partisan channel in Georgia, and people trust it.

Until these conditions are met, steady pressure from the Bush administration—a clear and consistent message from all U.S. officials, including threats to suspend Millennium Challenge Account aid—is the best hope for a return to the democratic path.

One of the Bush administration's flaws is that its democratic rhetoric is seldom followed by the specific and continuous actions necessary to promote U.S. interests over the long term. The collapse of Georgia's democratic transition is but one example of this lack of follow-through. During his last 14 months in office, President Bush, by his actions toward Georgia, could still show the world that his commitment to democracy abroad is more than just talk. ♦

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The Man Who Wants

Mitt Romney thinks the skills he acquired in the cutthroat world of corporate turnarounds will make him a good president

By Fred Barnes

Mitt Romney and George W. Bush both graduated from Harvard Business School in 1975. "We did attend one class together," Romney recalls, "but I must admit that we didn't hang out together or do things."

Nor did they become friends. Bush was single and fresh from five years in the Texas Air National Guard. A professor who taught Bush remembers him as a mediocre student who rarely participated in the give-and-take of class discussions. Bush earned an MBA and later wrote that Harvard "gave me the tools and vocabulary of the business world." But these skills didn't become central to his political career, much less his presidency.

Romney had a different Harvard experience. He was married with two kids. "I had passed the young and irresponsible stage," Romney told me. "I had a home and a mortgage. . . . I went at it with a lot of energy. I was also convinced that because I'd not come from one of these famous Eastern schools I'd probably flunk out. And I did a lot better than that." Romney had gone to Brigham Young University in Utah. At Harvard, he finished in the top 5 percent of his class and was named a Baker Scholar, a prestigious academic honor.

Romney took from his Harvard years a way of thinking and making decisions that he has applied relentlessly through two decades as a business executive, three as CEO and savior of the 2002 Winter Olympics, four as governor of Massachusetts, and now for a year as a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. If elected president, Romney intends to apply this approach in Washington.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

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To Fix Washington

His presidential style, as a result, would be far different from President Bush's—or any other president's. Romney would be coolly analytical and less political. Bush tends to follow his political instincts and rely on gut feelings in making decisions. A businessman who has dealt with both Romney and Bush, and admires both of them, says Romney "has internalized" what he learned at Harvard—particularly the value of debate and dissent—"but Bush hasn't." It's an important distinction.

Romney is not primarily a politician. He's a successful corporate executive with a second career in politics—a second career similar to Ronald Reagan's. He still slips into business consultant lingo, talking (at least to me) about "the breakthrough insight" and a person's "skill set" and "the selection, motivation, and guidance of people."

And because his résumé is heavy on business and relatively light on politics, the political community, the press, and presidential scholars are dubious of his qualifications for the presidency. Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution says his "hunch" is that the business sector is "a very bad place" for picking up what's required to be an effective president.

I'm not so sure. Romney is extremely smart, confident as a decision maker, and adept at finding grounds for agreement. His idea of the perfect deal is not when one side wins but when "you find a new alternative that everybody agrees is the right way to go. That doesn't always happen." Not in Washington anyway—Romney understands this. "Business and government are different," he told me.

Unlike everyone else running for president, though, Romney has a new method for solving problems and taking on difficult issues. Sure, it's a process that was developed outside of government, but Romney honed it in the cutthroat world of business consulting and corporate turnarounds, compared to which the fighting in Washington is tame. Do Hillary Clinton or John Edwards or Fred Thompson or John McCain have anything better to offer? All they have are agendas. Romney has one of those, too.

While Romney is conservative, his approach to governing is not ideological. "He's super-pragmatic," says an adviser. "He's an eclectic conservative." And this has alarmed several conservatives who have met with Romney. "He kept saying he's a problem solver," says an economic adviser who believes this would put Romney at a disadvantage in Washington. "He may not be ideological, but Nancy Pelosi certainly will be."

The Romney way is very simple. It consists of attacking a problem or considering an issue or policy through vigorous debate, with dissenting opinions encouraged and outside advice eagerly sought, and relying on as much hard data as possible. At the end of the process, the leader makes a decision that may or may not coincide with the "vision" or "concept" or "framework"—Romney's words—that initiated the discussion in the first place.

Here's how Romney describes the process:

> You diagnose the problem. You put the right team together to solve the problem. You listen to alternative viewpoints. You insist on gathering data before you make decisions and analyze the data looking for trends. The result of this process is, you hope, that you make better decisions. You typically also have processes in place to see if it's working or not working, and you make adjustments from time to time.

That's it. Romney loves the give-and-take. "I have to see conflict," he says. "The last thing you want is people coming in saying 'We all agree. Here's the recommendation.' I know I don't want to proceed on that basis." As governor of Massachusetts, Romney balked at extending Boston's mass transit system until he'd heard the case against it. Once he had, he decided to approve the extension.

Romney used this method of analysis and decision-making for six years with Bain Consulting in Boston, where his task was reviving failing companies. He used it again for 15 years when he headed Bain Capital, which specialized in investing in start-ups and late-stage turnarounds. Romney emphasized it while keeping the scandal-plagued 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah from collapsing and later in putting together a health insurance plan for Massachusetts that covered all the state's uninsured and got the overwhelmingly Democratic legislature and Senator Ted Kennedy to sign on.

And he's used it to fashion a blueprint for his presidential campaign. Romney weighed alternatives before adopting the early primary strategy of concentrating on the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire on the assumption that he must win one or both of them to spur his candi-

HERMANN MEJIA / PHOTO BY LEV NISNEVITCH

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Romney's optimism has a familiar ring. Governors who become president—Jimmy Car worked for them at the state level will work in Washington. Sometimes it does. Reaga Carter touted zero-based buc

Romney on the campaign trail in Iowa

ANNE RYAN / POLARIS

dacy and win the nomination. He's stuck to that strategy. Romney decided how much money his campaign needs to spend rather than how much it must raise. If there's a gap (and there has been), it would be filled by Romney's personal funds.

One more thing. Romney believes getting the right people on your team is crucial. "I like smart people," he wrote in *Turnaround*, his chronicle of saving the Winter Olympics. "Bill Bain, my old boss, used to joke that most things can be fixed, but smart—or dumb—is forever." Romney has a knack for persuading smart people to leave lucrative jobs to work for him for less pay.

Now, the overriding question about Romney is whether his approach would work in a Washington bitterly divided along partisan and ideological lines. Romney thinks so—no surprise there—and he cites as evidence his success in working with Democrats in Massachusetts. They were happy to share credit with the governor. The viciously partisan Democrats who control Congress wouldn't be so complaisant.

But by treating every issue as a problem to be solved, I suspect Romney could make headway on domestic policy, even on divisive issues like Social Security, health care, and immigration. Foreign and national security policy wouldn't be as amenable to the Romney scenario of debate and compromise. Nor would crisis management of the urgent and perilous kind a president is expected to handle. Romney's experience has been in *long-term* crisis management.

For Romney, Washington is a large turnaround project that he's impatient to take on. He would subject the entire federal bureaucracy, agency by agency, department by department, to a "strategic audit." This amounts to a full-scale frisk to find what doesn't work and what can be streamlined.

"I ask people why Washington is so broken," Romney told me:

> State after state is able to balance their budget every year, solve tough problems from time to time, fix their schools, fix their roads. They get the job done. Why is it Washington cannot? The most frequent answer I get is that Washington is so driven by who has power and the stakes of having power or not having it are so huge that people have ignored the interest of the country and placed the interest of their party's power ahead of it.

That must change, he says. "It's time to have some people put the country first, and I think there are Democrats as well as Republicans who will do that. In Massachusetts my political and philosophical adversary has been Ted Kennedy. We disagree on almost all issues . . . but we were able to collaborate on the health care solution in a way that will be a step forward."

That optimism has a familiar ring. Governors who become president—Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush—invariably think what worked for them at the state level will work in Washington. Sometimes it does. Reagan's ability to attract Democratic support did. Sometimes it doesn't. Carter touted zero-based budgeting as an effective tool in controlling spending. It wasn't.

Given his background, Romney is a special case. No president has had his long experience in the corporate world. Herbert Hoover once ran a mining company but he was essentially an engineer. More to the point, Hoover failed as president. Romney isn't unique in insisting the skills he developed as a business consultant and CEO would be useful in Washington. Ross Perot made a simi-

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lar claim when he ran for president in 1992 and 1996. But Perot was an oddball who never would have gotten his way in Washington. Romney is quite normal.

Besides rigorous analysis, he says he'd bring the "can do" spirit of the business community to a Romney presidency. "I have spent a lifetime getting things done," he told a crowd in Hopkinton, New Hampshire, recently. "In the private sector if all you do is talk, you get fired." The implication, of course, is that all Washington does is talk.

Two episodes when Romney ran Bain Capital are striking. In July 1996, a Bain managing director, Robert Gay, quietly informed Romney that his 14-year-old daughter Melissa had been missing for several days in New York City after attending a rock concert. Gay didn't ask for help in finding her, but he got it anyway.

Romney shut down the Bain office in Boston and took most of its 30 employees to Manhattan to search for the girl. He set up a "war room" in a hotel and devised a five-part plan. Dividing the city into sectors, Romney and his partners enlisted 250 people from firms they'd worked with in New York, mostly on Wall Street, to join the search. They blanketed the city with 250,000 flyers with the girl's picture and organized a media campaign. Twenty hours later, a New Jersey family heard of the dragnet, called the police, and reported Melissa was safe with them.

Five years earlier, Romney had been summoned from Bain Capital to lead a turnaround of the company which had created Bain Capital as a spin-off and where Romney had worked for six years, Bain Consulting. The firm was drowning in debt and on the verge of collapse. Romney applied the same approach he used to revitalize other companies, stressing analysis and data. The turnaround took nearly two years and worked because Romney persuaded Bain Consulting's partners to commit to staying. If they'd fled, the firm would have crumpled. Only one partner left. "Mitt Romney resurrected the consulting company's finances and then returned to his enormously successful and profitable Bain Capital," writes Hugh Hewitt, the talk radio host, in his book about Romney, *A Mormon in the White House?*

"Mission accomplished."

A legitimate worry about Romney is his lack of experience in foreign policy. He boasts of traveling to 40 countries as a Bain executive, but that's hardly preparation for guiding a nation's relationship with other countries and for serving as commander in chief. As a presidential candidate, Romney has sought to take the same position on foreign affairs he would if he were president.

Two examples. When President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran visited New York in September, Romney wanted to take a strong stand, but he found in discussion with advisers that his options were limited. Several advisers recommended he urge the State Department to deny Ahmadinejad a visa, but it emerged in the analysis-and-debate session that this would be illegal. The president is required by law to allow foreign leaders to attend meetings at the United Nations in New York. Instead Romney publicly said that Ahmadinejad should be disinvited from addressing the U.N.'s general assembly and from appearing at Columbia University. And he should be indicted under the U.N.'s Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide for advocating the destruction of Israel. This, in effect, is Romney's presidential position.

The second example occurred on Romney's trip to Israel last January. He arranged to visit the fence along the West Bank and was surprised by the reluctance of Israeli military officers to defend the building of the barrier. Romney asked the number of terrorist attacks before and after the fence was erected. Romney, an aide says, is "a before and after guy" in making judgments. When told attacks had dropped to zero, Romney said the Israelis shouldn't be apologetic about the fence. If the United States had faced the same terrorist threat, "we'd have built it 10 feet higher and called it a wall."

In formulating foreign policy, Romney says he favors the same freewheeling debate that he relishes in discussions on domestic policy. "Bringing together the right people who have differing viewpoints and perspectives and welcoming those differences"—that's his goal, he told me. In this regard, he suggests he'd be a bit like Bush.

"I remember reading these stories that there are arguments in the Bush administration and Colin Powell thinks one thing and Condoleezza Rice another. I mean, great! Why is this a story? That's what you expect. . . . You want that kind of debate. If you don't have that, the danger is that you miss risks and opportunities that you otherwise would find." Just as you would in the world of business. ♦

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Rudy Giuliani, Disciplinarian

Over the years he has tacked left and right, but his worldview has remained constant.

By Matthew Continetti

Rudolph Giuliani, the former New York City mayor and frontrunner for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination, worked in the Reagan administration as associate attorney general, the number three position in the Justice Department. At the time, Giuliani was the youngest associate attorney general in American history. Today, as he criss-crosses the country, speaking to Republican primary voters from Florida to Iowa to South Dakota to California, Giuliani is keen to emphasize his association with Reagan. He praises Reagan's "optimistic leadership." He emulates Reagan's toughness. He advocates so-called "Reaganomics."

And yet it would be a stretch to say that Giuliani is an adherent to the set of political ideas known as Reaganism. Giuliani adheres to Giuliani-ism. Where Reagan emphasized the enduring possibilities of freedom, Giuliani emphasizes the duties freedom imposes on citizens—the most important of which, in his opinion, is the duty of citizens to respect the law. Where Reagan set strategic goals, delegated authority (sometimes too broadly), and allowed room for his agency heads to innovate, Giuliani is a top-down executive known for micromanagement and for employing every possible legal authority to achieve his ends.

He also happens to have been one of the most effective chief executives in modern American history. Some view his doggedness, his maximalist position on every issue and the tactics he adopts, as a form of "authoritarianism," but that term is intended to insult rather than describe. It would be more accurate to call him a legalistic disciplinarian. And, indeed, one of the striking aspects of Giuliani's career is that, while he has tacked right in his quest for the 2008 nomination, his worldview seems to have remained consistent at least since his prosecutorial days. And one word best describes it: grim.

Giuliani recalls one of his first meetings with Reagan. It was early in 1981, shortly after Reagan had been inaugurated as the nation's 40th president. Reagan had invited the 36-year-old former assistant United States attorney, along with an assortment of other would-be deputies and undersecretaries, to the White House for breakfast. There were between 20 and 25 people there in all, Giuliani remembers, and the conversation between the ambitious functionaries and the president was lighthearted. Mostly they talked baseball. Reagan reminisced about his days as a sportscaster in Iowa. Toward the end of the breakfast the appointees shook hands and had their picture taken with the president. Giuliani gave his photo to his mother.

Giuliani had joined the GOP only a few months prior to meeting Reagan for breakfast. The story of how he came to join the party is interesting, not only for what it tells us about Giuliani's partisan evolution, but also for what it suggests about his character, and the character of his political thought. A liberal who had penned columns in his college paper extolling John Kennedy's virtues, Giuliani opposed the Vietnam war and voted for George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election. "I had traditionally been a Democrat," Giuliani told me in a recent interview in Las Vegas. "It was almost like a reflex mode. I actually remember saying to myself, 'If I was a person really deciding who should be president right now, I'd probably vote for Nixon, because I think the country would be safer with Nixon.' My concern was the Soviets, foreign policy, strong military." Whatever his concern, it was not enough to make Giuliani pull the lever for a Republican.

Shortly after McGovern lost, however, Giuliani's

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The U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York in 1987

politics began to change. Sometime in 1973, during an investigation into public corruption in New York City, Assistant U.S. Attorney Giuliani had a revelation. "I was just sitting in my office one day thinking, *I don't agree with the Democrats at all on foreign policy*," he says. "And I don't agree with them anymore on social policy. I think these welfare programs, which were well-intended, are disasters, and the corruption is rampant." Giuliani went to the Board of Elections to change his registration. "I said, 'Can I change registration?' and they said, 'Sure.' So they gave me a new card to fill out. There were a whole bunch of choices of party. I was considering putting down Republican, but I thought, *No, I don't know what I am right now*. So I thought, *I'm a U.S. attorney, maybe it's better if I'm an independent*." And that is what he became.

Giuliani remained an independent throughout his first stint in Washington, as associate deputy attorney general in the Ford administration. He and his first wife Regina lived in a condominium in Rosslyn, across the Potomac from the capital, and voted in Virginia elections. You don't have to declare a party affiliation to vote in Virginia. Giuliani did not register as a Republican, but says he voted for Republicans. "I voted for Gerry Ford. I had met him, really respected him—big supporter of Gerry Ford. And then, by the time I left Washington I was a Republican."

Not quite. When Jimmy Carter became president in January 1977, Giuliani returned to New York City, where he worked in private practice at the firm Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler. He was still an independent. It was not until December 8, 1980—a month after Reagan defeated Carter—that Giuliani changed his official registration status to Republican. He seemed eager to return to Washington. "Rudy's switch coincided with the handing out of new political appointments by the Reagan administration," writes one of Giuliani's biographers, *Village Voice* reporter Wayne Barrett. "And Rudy, whose former Patterson Belknap colleague, Richard Parsons, was on the Reagan transition team, knew he had a shot at one."

As associate attorney general, Giuliani oversaw the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the U.S. marshals, the Bureau of Prisons, and all U.S. attorneys. He chaired a violent crime taskforce and handled the Reagan administration's response to the Haitian and Cuban refugee crises. He helped to extradite a couple of Nazi war criminals. He met Ted Olson, the future solicitor

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general of the United States, who was then serving as assistant attorney general for the office of legal counsel. The two became close. "It doesn't take more than five minutes to become friends with Rudy Giuliani," Olson tells me. Today Olson is a senior adviser to the Giuliani campaign and chairs its "Justice Advisory Board."

Giuliani had served in the Reagan administration for about two years when the president appointed him U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York. The job launched his career in New York City politics and made him famous both for bringing down the mob and for ordering alleged white-collar crooks frog-marched in public. Giuliani thrived in the spotlight and reveled in his newfound fame. He tacked left in his 1989 mayoral run, lost, then tacked right again in 1993, eking out a victory. And his achievements in New York—not, as is so widely claimed, his leadership on September 11, 2001—serve as the touchstone for his presidential candidacy.

What sort of president would he be? The habits of mind that would inform the governing style of President Giuliani are not a mystery; there are plenty of clues to what may await us. For Giuliani, the existence of evil requires good citizens to uphold the rule of law. He quotes James Madison—"If all men were angels, we wouldn't need governments"—before adding, "And sure, that could also be the result of having been, for more of my life than anything else, a prosecutor." He goes on, "And seeing horrible evil, and people who had committed murders, people who had committed significant numbers of murders, people who would step on the legs of other people. The rational mind has a hard time understanding horrible people, who are not operating on, you know, principles of any kind of decency. And it's very hard for the rational mind to conceive that there are people that are totally warped."

Giuliani sees the law as the tool by which evil is disciplined and the city made safe for law-abiding citizens. And the law means what it says. When Giuliani says he is a strict constructionist, he is saying he has a restrictive view of the rights enumerated in the Constitution and a technical, legalistic approach to statutory interpretation. What he is not saying is that the Supreme Court incorrectly decided *Roe* v. *Wade*. "Strict constructionism is much broader than just one case," he says. "I thought a number of the decisions of the Warren Court, with regard to accused criminals, had gone way overboard in almost only seeing the rights of accused criminals and not seeing the implications that that had for the rights of victims, and for the right of the rest of society to be safe. It was almost like a process without limit, if you could invent a new right for a criminal, it was almost considered a decent society if you gave the criminal this additional right, and nobody was asking the question, 'Well, doesn't there come a point where you give so many rights to criminals that you're making society much more dangerous?'"

It probably was the exclusionary rule, the legal principle by which evidence collected unconstitutionally is inadmissible in U.S. courts, that made Giuliani a strict constructionist. "The exclusionary rule is a rule that I've always thought had no basis in logic," he says. "I always agreed with the dissent that said if the constable blunders, the criminal should not be set free. And the court has done a good job limiting the exclusionary rule by creating exceptions to it. But the core of the rule, to me, does not emerge from the Constitution. The more logical remedy for violation of, let's say, the right of privacy in your home, would be to punish the offending officer, rather than let the evidence be suppressed, and let the drug dealer go free, or the murderer go free or . . ."

He pauses.

"I remember once I had a case in court, wasn't mine, it was one of my colleagues', I'm pretty sure that's right. I remember it right, and a judge ruled that the seizure of the evidence and the guns was illegal. And the assistant U.S. attorney, who thought the ruling was wrong, got up and said to the judge, 'Do I have to give it back to him? Since it's his property, does it mean he leaves the courthouse not only a free man, but do I, should I, judge, should I give him the drugs and guns back?' And the judge got very angry. I think he was disciplined, the assistant U.S. attorney was disciplined, and I thought he was making a real point that the judge shouldn't have gotten angry about, because in essence—well, we didn't have to give the drugs and the guns back—but I'm pretty sure that a drug dealer, and a potential murderer, got out of the courthouse that day, and he got some more drugs, some more guns. Why should innocent people in society pay the price of mistakes that law enforcement officers make? And finally, when they're just mistakes, which happen in an intricate business like law enforcement, why, why the hell—why the heck—are you making society more dangerous as a result of it?"

Giuliani's strict constructionism extends to the separation of powers. In his view, the judiciary—not the legislature or the executive or all three coequal branches—is the final arbiter of a law's constitutionality. In a July interview in Iowa, Giuliani explained to me the role each branch ought to play in the functioning of government. "It's real simple," he said. "The legislature makes laws, the executive carries out those laws, and the judiciary interprets them. And if any one of the three oversteps their bounds, it seems to me, we've actually deprived the American people of the liberty and the freedom and the democracy they

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have. If Congress fails to make writing with a Sharpie a crime . . ."

He held up a black Sharpie marker for emphasis.

". . . the president can't decide all of a sudden that it's a crime and put people in jail for that. The president can't make laws.

"But if Congress does make the law that it's a crime, then the president's got to carry it out until the court says it's an improper use of congressional power," he continued. "Because otherwise the other branches are probably going to encroach. When I see presidents fighting for presidential prerogative, and they get criticized for it, well, who's *going* to fight for it if the president doesn't? If the president doesn't fight for presidential prerogative, Congress will usurp that prerogative. And if Congress doesn't fight for its prerogatives, the president may usurp it, and then we've got the Court, to be the referee and decide: Has the president gone too far? Or has Congress gone too far?"

What do you do if you disagree with a law Congress has passed, I asked.

"Then you go to court," he said. "Every once in a while, the city council would pass a law while I was the mayor that I didn't agree with. If I wasn't going to follow it, I'd take it to court. And the court said, they don't have authority to pass this. And sometimes Congress does pass laws they don't have the authority to pass. Congress loves to encroach on the president, as much as the president encroaches on Congress."

As mayor of New York City, Giuliani put these ideas into practice and, if you listen to him long enough, you begin to understand that if he becomes president he will attempt to apply them on a global scale. In Las Vegas, sitting in a dimly lit suite on the twenty-eighth floor of the Venetian tower, he outlines how excessive license had made New York ungovernable. "We are not allowed to do anything we want to do," he says. "That's chaos. Liberty is ceding a certain amount of your ability to do what you want so that everybody else can live in peace and freedom and respecting the rights of other people. Squeegee operators and graffiti people used to kind of preach that to me, with the oldest graffiti all over the city. People would say, 'Well, that's free speech.' Well, wait a second. If it's not your property, and if it's my property, and you just painted something on my property that I didn't want, then that's vandalism. It's not free speech; it's defacing and destroying my property. And, to live in a society of many people, we have to all respect the rights of other people. And we can't just do everything we want to do."

When I ask Giuliani if there were parallels between his fight against criminality and the war on Islamic terrorists, he says: "This is why I say I'm the best qualified to deal with terrorism.

"Someone once said to me that what they don't get about the Democrats, and even some Republicans that do this, is they're more concerned about rights for terrorists than the terrorists' wrongs," Giuliani went on. "I mean, this granting of rights to criminals and terrorists, even when they're necessary, come with a price, a price at the other end of it. Even for the ones that are necessary, like, let's say, the Miranda ruling, it's one you agree with—there's a price for that. Maybe it's one worth paying. The exclusionary rule, there's a big price for that: Criminals go free. They walk out of court. If you say, you know, no aggressive questioning, then we're not going to find out about situations. If you say no wiretapping, well, there'll be conversations going on, planning to bomb New York, or Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and you're not going to find out. And, when we draw these lines, at least let's be honest with people about the consequences of them. Let's not fool them into thinking that there are no consequences to this. People will say that aggressive questioning doesn't work. I, you know, I . . . Honest answer to that is, it doesn't work all the time. Sometimes it does."

Just as Giuliani disciplined an anarchic city, so too would he try to discipline a disordered world. "Civilization must stand up and combat the current collapse of governance, the rise of violence, and the spread of chaos and fear in many parts of the world," he wrote in a much-derided, and little-studied, recent essay in *Foreign Affairs*:

> I know from personal experience that when security is reliably established in a troubled part of a city, normal life rapidly reestablishes itself: shops open, people move back in, children start playing ball on the sidewalks again, and soon a decent and law-abiding community returns to life. The same is true in world affairs. Disorder in the world's bad neighborhoods tends to spread. Tolerating bad behavior breeds more bad behavior. But concerted action to uphold international standards will help people, economies, and states to thrive. Civil society can triumph over chaos if it is backed by determined action.

The boldness of such a metaphor—that the world is nothing more than a really, really big New York City—is unmistakable; a Giuliani presidency would test whether or not the metaphor actually is true. One thing is clear, however. You sometimes hear that Giuliani is a cipher, that he has hidden or downplayed his true self in order to appeal to the Republican primary electorate, and the American electorate more generally. Nothing could be further from the truth. His instincts, his thoughts, his goals, his tactics, his audacity—it is all there in the open, like it or not, as it has been from the beginning. ♦

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Why They Call It the Dismal Science

Everything you need to know about the mortgage crisis in three economics buzzwords.

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Externalities. Information asymmetry. Moral hazard. Understand those three bits of economists' jargon, and you can be a do-it-yourself housing- and mortgage-market policymaker. Or at least you can thread your way through the competing proposals of conservatives—who want the government to keep hands off these markets, and let improvident borrowers and lenders swing in the wind—and interventionists who want to help those of their poor (think unemployed in Michigan, and large numbers of blacks and Hispanics) and almost rich (think suburban New York and California) constituents who are having trouble making their mortgage payments.

Externalities are the economist's version of the military's collateral damage. Externalities happen to innocent bystanders. Information asymmetry, another economist's favorite, refers to what happens in a market when one party to a transaction, usually the seller, inevitably knows a lot more about the product than the buyer. Moral hazard is the risk we run when we bail someone out of trouble he could have avoided, encouraging others to repeat the greedy, stupid, or excessively risky behavior. These definitions are not precise enough to satisfy academics, but are good enough for policy work.

It doesn't take a policy wonk to know that externalities abound in both the housing and mortgage markets. Foreclose on one house on a street, and the value of all the others, including those owned by perfectly solvent families, declines. During the foreclosure period of several months the occupant has no incentive to maintain the property; as Larry Summers pointed out in another connection, no one ever washes a rented car. While the eviction process is being completed, the house is often stripped of its sinks, aluminum siding, and everything else that can be sold. The grass is uncut, and even if the bank, now the unhappy owner, tries to keep up appearances, it generally cannot. Banks make rotten housekeepers.

As a result, the neighborhood declines. Other homeowners, watching the value of their properties spiral downward, and the neighborhood become tackier, attempt to flee. For-sale signs proliferate. Property values drop further. Foreclosures rise. Innocent bystanders, perfectly prudent borrowers, are caught in a trap not of their own making. The policy question then gets complicated. It is not, "Do we try to help someone who borrowed too much from a lender who should have known better?" It becomes, "Is it good public policy to shield people from the external effect of the improvident action of others?"

So, too, in the credit markets. Foolish lenders find that the loans they made will not be repaid. Too bad, is the first reaction. But because no one is able to separate bad loans from good in many of the securities in which they are embedded, all lending screeches to a halt, creating problems for businesses with credit quality as good the day after the collapse of the subprime mortgage market as it was the day before. The banks that made the loans face huge write-offs, the price of their improvidence; their ability to lend to even the best borrowers declines with the shrinking of the asset side of their balance sheets. Help (or bail out) the improvident lender and you create moral hazard—a signal to others that such behavior will have no adverse consequences; refuse to help, and innocent bystanders by the score pay the price for a "crime" they did not commit. Factories do not get built; jobs do not get created; promising new enterprises don't get off the ground.

The problem is further complicated by information asymmetry. The seller of mortgages knows a lot more about what he is selling than does the home buyer/borrower. This is especially true in the subprime market. No good to rail against the borrower for his or her ignorance. Information

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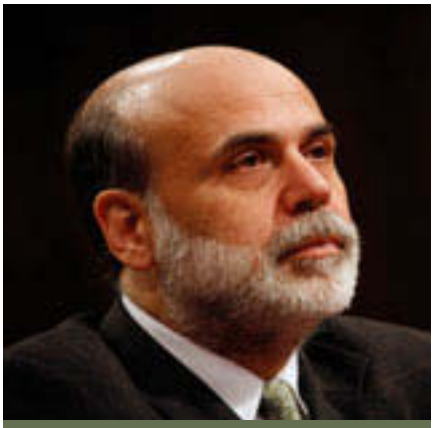
asymmetry is and will remain an enduring fact of life. In some cases, that is offset by the seller's need to—another bit of economists' jargon—preserve his reputational capital, better known to the old-fashioned as his good name. But the mortgage broker will never see this particular borrower again, who is anyhow unlikely to realize that he has been taken advantage of in time to warn off others. Worse still, that broker has no long-lasting connection with the mortgage he has sold. That risk is sold off to buyers who are assuming they can package the loan with others of varying quality, and resell the package to still other buyers who are afflicted with—that's right—information asymmetry, known at this stage in the chain as a lack of transparency. Buying a pig in a poke is an earthier way to put it.



If Ben Bernanke needs any sign that he has struck a proper balance between the moral hazard of inflation and financial panic, all he has to do is look across the Atlantic to London, where the governor of the Bank of England came down on the side of avoiding moral hazard. Thereby hangs a sad tale of a central banker who got the balance wrong.

GARY FABIANO / SIPA PRESS

Does the government have a role to play in any of this? The "moral hazard fundamentalists," as Summers calls them, say no. Do anything to ameliorate the pain of the dispossessed, or of the lender left holding the bag, or of any other party to these transactions, and you only invite repetition of the practices that got us into trouble in the first place.

Which brings us to Ben Bernanke and the Federal Reserve Board's monetary policy gurus. Everyone agrees that if a recession is looming, or some shock to the financial markets has caused a credit crunch, the Fed should cut interest rates to stimulate investment and consumption. And everyone agrees that if the opposite circumstance prevails—if inflation is rearing its ugly head in the form of high oil and food prices, rising labor costs, and a labor market at or close to full employment—it should keep rates relatively high to cool things down.

All simple monetary policy. But what if inflation looms, dictating a rise in interest rates, and at the same time there is an upheaval in the credit markets, dictating a cut? If, say, oil is heading towards $100 per barrel while at the same time banks find that credit markets have seized up? Being able to solve that dilemma is what gets Bernanke & Co. the big bucks—or at least virtually unlimited ego-gratifying attention (to add to the lesson, economists call that psychic income).

So far, Bernanke has decided that the risks of creating moral hazard, and of feeding inflation, are outweighed by the necessity of avoiding the externalities associated with a financial panic: He has cut interest rates and pumped liquidity into the financial system. If he needed any sign that he has struck the proper balance, all he has to do is look across the Atlantic to London, where his counterpart, the governor of the Bank of England, came down on the side of avoiding moral hazard. Thereby hangs a sad tale of a central banker who got the balance seriously wrong.

A major U.K. bank called Northern Rock had a business model built on sand. Its directors had decided that its mortgage lending business would not grow fast enough if it restricted itself to lending only the funds received from its depositors. So it began borrowing in the short-term credit markets, to lend money to potential home-buyers. In bank jargon, it was borrowing short to lend long. For a time this worked: Northern Rock accounted for 20 percent of all net new mortgage lending in the U.K. in the first half of this year. When the credit markets seized up, Northern Rock could no longer borrow enough to meet the demands of its ordinary depositors, even though the mortgages it held were perfectly sound. So it appealed to the Bank of England for help.

It would not have been unusual for Mervyn King, the Bank of England's governor, to respond by lending the besieged bank enough money against good collateral to pay off enough depositors to reassure the others that they need not withdraw their funds. Such an injection of liquidity is the standard practice of most central banks, and is precisely what both the European Central Bank and Bernanke did (to the tune of $134 billion and $24 billion, respectively) to try to unfreeze credit markets. But King worried more about moral hazard than did his counterparts in America and on the continent. So he sat on his hands and the Bank of Eng-

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land's wallet; depositors panicked, and Britain had its first run on a major bank in over 100 years.

With pictures on front pages around the world of depositors queuing up—in the patient and polite fashion for which Brits are famous—at Northern Rock's offices, the government had to act in order to avoid a great big externality, the collapse of the entire banking system and a severe recession. So it, meaning the taxpayers, guaranteed all of the funds of Northern Rock depositors (there is only limited deposit insurance in Britain). Relieved depositors, many of them pensioners, dropped out of the queue, returned home, made themselves a cup of tea, and calmed down.

This created some risk of moral hazard. But the alternative might have been a cascading failure of illiquid but still solvent banks, with immeasurable consequences for the general economy—including innocent bystanders by the millions. Our old friend, externalities again.

So far, so good. Bernanke injected enough liquidity into the system to avoid cascading externalities, but not so much as to create moral hazard. The axing of Stanley O'Neal at Merrill Lynch, and Charles Prince at Citigroup, should serve as enough of a warning to their successors that a repetition of the failed lending policies of the departed CEOs has career-ending potential. Unless, of course, the new generation of bankers finds the handsome golden goodbyes pocketed by O'Neal and Prince an attractive offset to the ignominy of forced entry into the leisure class.

Our politicians are not doing quite as deft a balancing act as has Bernanke. As usual, they have been panicked into proposing cures that are likely to do more harm than good. Put the subprime problem into perspective: 35 percent of homeowners have no mortgage debt at all; of those with mortgages, 95 percent are paying on time; 83 percent of those with adjustable-rate subprime mortgages are up-to-date on their payments. Even if this situation deteriorates, and it will, we have to be careful when tinkering with a system that has produced high levels of home ownership and relatively low levels of financial difficulty.

We have to be careful, too, not to underestimate the flexibility of private-sector lenders. Some lenders—not many, so far—are preparing to renegotiate the terms of mortgages, rather than allow the higher, re-set interest rates to trigger foreclosures on the properties of those unable to meet the new payments. A somewhat lower interest rate than had been originally negotiated is preferable to a foreclosed property worth significantly less than the outstanding amount due on the mortgage, and legal fees that come to about 25 percent of the value of a typical subprime loan.

Which brings us to the Treasury, and Hank Paulson. The Treasury secretary is pressing lenders to work out deals with borrowers—"loan modifications and refinancing and other flexibility"—to reduce the default rate. "I don't want to see foreclosures taking place where 50 percent of the people haven't talked to anybody." Whether lenders, whose self-interest dictates just such a course of action, need prodding is uncertain, although there are some reports that Countrywide, America's biggest mortgage lender, agreed to refinance about $10 billion in loans and modify the terms of another $4 billion of mortgages only after the government put pressure on it to do so. It is the lending industry's reluctance to act on a wide scale—for the perfectly good reason that banks don't want to grant relief to those who can meet the new higher borrowing costs—that prompted Sheila Bair, chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), to urge the industry to drop its insistence on a case-by-case renegotiation in favor of an industry-wide agreement to freeze the introductory rate on the shakiest mortgages pending individual renegotiation—a step the Treasury is not yet prepared to endorse.

Whatever the outcome, a nudge from the Treasury and the FDIC can't hurt, especially since lenders so far haven't seemed to solve the mechanics of getting these case-by-case negotiations underway on a large scale. The fact that no one seems to know which institution holds which mortgages, many of which are now embedded in securities that have restrictions against renegotiation of mortgage terms, is inhibiting renegotiations. The White House is guessing that lenders can be persuaded (pressured?) to step up their efforts to identify a rather large number of borrowers who "are in the right house with the wrong loan," to quote one official, and by renegotiating the mortgage terms reduce the foreclosure rate which is, unfortunately from the administration's point of view, due to peak in key, closely contested electoral states (Ohio, Florida, Nevada) in an election year.

Nor can there be any reasonable objection to the decision by most policymakers that it is a good idea to try to reduce information asymmetry. Legislation is in the works to do what can be done to help borrowers better understand the terms of the mortgages to which they affix their signatures. Those documents will remain opaque, however, because of legal requirements that all details be disclosed, and the intrinsic difficulty of explaining the pricing of a service—credit—that is to run for decades.

Besides, the desire for greater symmetry of information between lender and borrower cannot be allowed to morph into a set of rules that will reduce the availability of credit to potential homeowners who can indeed afford to repay their loans. Requirements such as those contained in a bill approved by the House Financial Services Committee—

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lenders would have to see to it that borrowers receive "a net tangible benefit" from refinancing their mortgages—will surely scare a lot of capital out of mortgage markets. Consider only the question of the interest rate. It would be the height of symmetry and clarity to bar anything except a fixed rate of interest over the life of a mortgage. But that would deprive borrowers, especially young couples, who can reasonably expect their incomes to rise over the three decades that most mortgages are outstanding, from obtaining low starter rates, with higher re-sets along the way.

All of these issues are involved in determining the extent to which the government should intervene in mortgage markets.

Government, of course, is already a major player through a variety of agencies, especially the so-called GSEs such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (a client of the author's), whose role is to increase the availability of credit and to lower its cost by buying mortgages from lenders, bundling them, and reselling them to investors. Refuse to allow the GSEs to expand their activities, and you increase the pain in housing markets in parts of the country in which mortgages in the $417,000 range (Freddie's and Fannie's limit) are common, and hit the part of the apartment market that depends on the GSEs for financing. That means forfeiting the externalities that studies show are associated with home ownership, among them safer neighborhoods and better schools, and what Paulson calls "civic involvement."

Despite Paulson's jawing, and Bernanke's support for temporarily increasing the $417,000 limit on the size of loans eligible for securitization by the GSEs to $1 million, the White House remains more fearful of moral hazard than of the externalities associated with widespread foreclosures, while Democrats generally prefer a different balance, with moral hazard the lesser of the worries. This difference is merely a subset of the two parties' views on expanding the role of government, with Democrats more inclined to do just that than the Republicans, among them born-again-fiscal-conservative George W. Bush.

Both parties do seem to agree on the need to reduce information asymmetry wherever possible, with the Democrats generally more willing than their Republican counterparts to risk impeding the flow of capital into the housing market by eliminating the flexibility in mortgage terms that has done so much to make home ownership possible for families that cannot obtain traditional, 30-year, fixed-interest, relatively high down payment mortgages, but are nevertheless capable of financing a more flexible mortgage.

Balancing all of these considerations on behalf of his colleagues is the congressman from the Fourth Congressional District of Massachusetts, and chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, Barney Frank. The fact that he is playing the lead role for the Democrats is generally recognized even by his political opponents to be a good thing, or at least not a bad thing, considering the alternatives.

Frank is bright, and understands how financial markets work. More important, he is under pressure from two opposing groups, and therefore has to strike a balance. The trial lawyers, an important source of funds for Democratic candidates, would like to festoon the statute books with rules that would, among other things, penalize lenders for making "overly expensive loans." That would surely make banks find better things to do with their capital than grant mortgages that are an invitation to litigation.

> Against the pressure being exerted by the trial lawyers, and the anti-banker sentiment of his constituents in the nuclear-free zone of Brookline, Barney Frank has to weigh the needs of the blue-collar Democrats who have benefited mightily from the new, flexible mortgages.

Against the pressure being exerted by the trial lawyers, and probably the anti-banker sentiment of his constituents in the nuclear-free zone of Brookline and the academic community of Wellesley, Frank has to weigh the needs of the traditional upward-striving, blue-collar Democrats who have benefited mightily from the new, flexible mortgages. They have no desire to see lending shrivel and mortgage rates rise merely to satisfy trial lawyers' appetite for litigation or the prejudices of liberal upper-income groups, safely ensconced in their homes, financed in large part with traditional mortgages.

Most people on Wall Street have reasonable confidence in Frank's ability to come up with the right answers, a sort of Bernanke of the legislative world. If men do indeed matter, it might just be that America is well served by the Bernanke, Paulson, Frank troika, as they search for solutions that minimize both externalities and moral hazard, and reduce information asymmetry. Perhaps the injection of liquidity by Bernanke will confine the pain of the current repricing of risk to acceptable levels without creating moral hazard, the flexibility by lenders being pushed by Paulson will minimize externalites, and the legislation being crafted by Frank will reduce the level of information asymmetry. But only "perhaps." It is, after all, the primary election season, and soon to be an election year, a time when politics trumps economics. ♦

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Anthropology Goes to War

More academics do not top the list of what the Army needs in Afghanistan.

By Ann Marlowe

At this point in the war on terror, even people who think David Galula is a trendy new chef are quick to point to the need for cultural understanding in successful counterinsurgency. Often, they are quicker still to beat up on our military for supposedly ignoring this. They are quite sure that if we just understood the Iraqis/Afghans/Shiites/Sunnis better, we would have made fewer mistakes. The military is ready to beat up on itself, too, although if you scan military journals, it seems to have spent much of the last few years retooling to fight small rather than large wars, and to emphasize counterinsurgency and nation-building rather than mere kinetics (aka killing).

We should learn the lessons of Vietnam and Algeria, we are earnestly told. Well, perhaps the most successful counterinsurgency operation ever mounted, David Galula's in Algeria, doesn't build the case for the overweening importance of cultural knowledge. The Algerians pacified thanks to Galula's insights were French-speaking (some of the leaders of the FLN barely spoke Arabic). The French took back territory from the rebels not because Galula convinced them that he understood their culture, but because he convinced them that their interests were better served by affiliation with France. (A dozen pages of Galula are worth more than anything written by anyone mentioned in this article. His 1963 *Pacification in Algeria*, reissued by RAND last year, is a witty, snappy, pre-PC read.)

While self-criticism can be healthy, we shouldn't lose sight of what actually works. I saw classic counterinsurgency doctrine working in Afghanistan during a two week embed in Khost and Laghman provinces this past July. In Khost, our soldiers were doing close to what Galula's company did in 1956: moving off the big bases, into the countryside, and providing people there with an immediate promise of security and, for the first time, a taste of the rewards of having a government. We are much further along with the strategy of pushing out into rural areas in Khost—a province that shares a 150-mile border with Pakistan's most lawless areas—than in Laghman, and not surprisingly, the numbers are much better there.

The Khost civil-military operations center is located in what was once a guesthouse belonging to Osama bin Laden, who spent time here in the '90s. Khost Province, once a "red" area—army lingo for a hotbed of insurgency and violence—now has 9 of its 12 districts listed as "green," or well controlled by Afghan forces. (Four of the 9 green districts, Bak, Tani, Tere Zayi, and Shamai, now have U.S. troops living in the district centers, and U.S. troops should be living in two more green districts, Gurbuz and Mando Zayi, by November 30. They will also move into Sabari, a "red" district, at the same time.) The province, with a population of one million, has suffered 70 IED explosions in 2007, killing 34 Afghans but no coalition troops. There hasn't been a suicide bombing since the spring; earlier in 2007, eight suicide bombers killed 32 Afghans.

In Laghman, with 400,000 people, one province removed from the Pakistani border, there have been 67 IED attacks and two suicide bombings, killing nine Afghan civilians and 19 Afghan security personnel, and one American soldier. The last suicide bomber was just a few weeks ago—he took an Afghan police officer with him.

Why does Laghman, a nonborder province, lead Afghanistan in IED attacks per capita? One reason is probably that our troops are not yet living in district centers. There is one very primitive combat outpost in Najil, but troops are only there for two-week rotations because it offers tent accommodation without kitchens or plumbing.

It's hard to overemphasize how good an idea it is to have our troops living close to the people. When our soldiers live on remote bases, they are visible to Afghans

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY SGT. SCOTT LASCO, U.S. ARMY

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U.S. soldiers and village elders inspect a floodwall, after a shura in Laghman Province, July 2007.

mainly when they do patrols, and then only as vague silhouettes through the bulletproof, sealed windows of up-armored Hummers. The only American who isn't behind glass is the gunner in his intimidating perch. There are dismounted patrols as well—but our troops probably spend more time in Humvees than they should.

Such at least is the position taken in the Army's new Field Manual 3-24, the Galula-inspired, Petraeus-supervised bible on counterinsurgency, which has this to say on the subject in Appendix A:

> Raiding from remote, secure bases does not work. Movement on foot, sleeping in villages, and night patrolling all seem more dangerous than they are—and they are what ground forces are trained to do. . . . Driving around in an armored convoy actually degrades situational awareness. It makes Soldiers and Marines targets and is ultimately more dangerous than moving on foot and remaining close to the populace.

Major Tim Kohn of the Civil Affairs unit for the 2nd Battalion of the 321st Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division had obviously mastered the lessons of FM 3-24. One of the reasons he told me for stationing platoons in Khost province's district centers is that they spend less time riding hither and yon in Humvees, and more interacting with Afghans.

Even in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, which are less friendly to Americans than the provinces I visited, the Afghan people are overwhelmingly appreciative of foreign troops and opposed to the Taliban. According to a Canadian survey conducted in late September in Afghanistan, 64 percent of respondents said "the foreigners have made a lot of progress or some progress in the fight against the Taliban." In Kandahar, stronghold of the Ghilzai Pashtuns who predominate in the Taliban leadership, 58 percent nevertheless say the foreigners are doing a good job battling the Taliban. Nationally, 89 percent of Afghans view the Taliban unfavorably and 93 percent doubt its ability to provide security.

Meanwhile, just as our methodical, unglamorous strategies are bearing fruit, our military seems to be buying into the "cultural knowledge" critique, and buying into a dubious version at that. Just a few weeks apart this fall, articles appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* and *New York Times* about a new idea the U.S. Army is trying out—attaching anthropologists and cultural experts to combat brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan. The program is called the Human Terrain System and is in its infancy. In Afghanistan, the first team of five experts deployed to FOB Salerno, in Khost, in January 2007 for a six month tour. (In Iraq, the first teams of Arabic language and culture experts have just been deployed.)

The concept is appealing: Make sure that the troops who are interacting with Afghans know how to work within the culture. Give our maneuver commanders cul-

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Children in Laghman province: The Afghan people are overwhelmingly appreciative of foreign troops and opposed to the Taliban.

tural and linguistic experts who can help them to figure out what is going on beneath the surface and influence local leaders. And after investing maybe a thousand hours studying Farsi/Dari, I was gratified to hear that the Army is coming around to seeing linguistic capabilities as a crucial part of counterinsurgency.

In the words of a *Military Review* article (September-October 2006) that described the Human Terrain System idea for a military audience:

> HTS will provide deployed brigade commanders and their staffs direct social-science support in the form of ethnographic and social research, cultural information research, and social data analysis that can be employed as part of the military decisionmaking process.
>
> The core building block of the system will be a five-person Human Terrain Team (HTT) that will be embedded in each forward-deployed brigade or regimental staff. The HTT will provide the commander with experienced officers, NCOs, and civilian social scientists trained and skilled in cultural data research and analysis.

The Human Terrain Team program was touted in late 2006 in an adulatory *New Yorker* article by George Packer on the State Department's chief counterinsurgency strategist, David Kilcullen. A retired Australian army colonel, Kilcullen also holds a doctorate in anthropology. He's an author of the Army's new counterinsurgency field manual, an excellent writer, and an extremely smart man. Nevertheless, I emerged from a meeting with him in Washington unable to get a handle on exactly how he proposed to defeat the Afghan insurgency. While he was understandably more focused on Iraq (and left for an extended mission there shortly after our meeting), his knowledge of the situation in Afghanistan seemed lacking in detail.

This same sense of vague generalities followed me as I tracked down Steve Fondacaro, the head of the Human Terrain System program. Just after meeting Kilcullen, I learned that a brilliant acquaintance, Afghanistan expert Thomas Johnson, who teaches at the Naval Postgraduate School's program for culture and conflict studies, was helping to develop a database for the Human Terrain Teams. Johnson is an expert on the Pashtuns—the dominant tribe in southern Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan—with substantial time on the ground. He put me in touch with Fondacaro, a retired colonel with the 82nd Airborne Division, and we spoke on the phone in the winter and spring of 2007.

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Again, I was unable to get a handle on exactly what the teams planned to do, but I thought it would all become clear once the program was operational. And so I requested that part of my embed be at FOB Salerno in Khost so that I could meet with some of the Human Terrain Team members and see them in action.

To my dismay, the Army had double-booked my embed with the HTT. I would have to find another topic to cover. I was assigned instead to the Civil Affairs unit for the 2nd Battalion of the 321st Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division and spent five days with them. Although unable to embed with the HTT, I was able to sit down with Fondacaro, HTT cofounder Montgomery McFate, a Ph.D. in anthropology, and an Iranian-born female Army officer who did not want her name used.

This meeting, on July 28, was a huge disappointment. I emerged from it with the distinct impression that I was seeing the emperor's new clothes. What I heard from Civil Affairs cemented my impression. The HTT had given Major Kohn a report on Khost Province and under the heading "economy," the lead sentence stated that the Khost economy is dominated by poppy production. In reality there is no opium grown in the province. Today, the website that provides "reachback" for the team, and is accessible to the general public, states correctly that Khost does not produce poppy (www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS).

"The data was not very accurate and it was broad, country-wide information," Major Kohn told me. A bright, articulate, and imperturbable reservist, Kohn, 34, whose civilian job was head of Barclays Global Investors' defined contribution sales and strategy in San Francisco, is very much New Army.

"What is more troubling," he emailed me later, "was that the report was issued without ever talking to a local maneuver commander, district Sub-Governor or Provincial official. After pointing out the broad 'cut and paste' nature of the report, I never received a correction or response. And they are co-located with us at Salerno."

Since the HTT program was in its infancy, and did not consume a significant amount of taxpayers' money, I decided to hold fire after my embed. But reading the glowing accounts in the *Times* (October 5) and *Christian Science Monitor* (September 7), including the information that an additional $40 million is being spent on the HTTs, now makes me wonder if good money will be thrown after bad. In our July meeting, Col. Fondacaro seemed an amiable man, trying to serve his country and make an honorable postretirement living. Montgomery McFate was exceptionally bright and articulate, but with the nervous manner of someone trying to sell a lemon.

McFate, who received a Ph.D. from Yale, with a dissertation on British counterinsurgency in Northern Ireland, showed no familiarity with the work of Benedicte Grima and Charles Lindholm, anthropologists who have published widely on Pashtun culture. A fulsome *San Francisco Chronicle* profile ("Montgomery McFate's Mission: Can one anthropologist possibly steer the course in Iraq?" April 29, 2007) inadvertently suggests that she is equally sketchy on Arab culture; she speaks of using Raphael Patai's 1973 book *The Arab Mind*—a purported favorite of neocons—"correctly." I'm as neocon as they come, but Patai's book is wrong in both details and thesis, and cannot be used "correctly."

As Dr. McFate and Col. Fondacaro chainsmoked their way through our interview, they used the same strategy. They disparaged the Army's approach in Afghanistan—where neither one of them has any meaningful experience—in order to market their program.

They spoke as though they were among the Army of 1964, focused on body counts and kill ratios, rather than the Army of the *Small Wars Journal*, the new counterinsurgency field manual, and the endless "lessons learned" briefings. Here is a representative quotation from the *Times* article ("Tracy" being the pseudonym of a member of the Human Terrain Team):

> In eastern Afghanistan, Tracy said wanted [sic] to reduce the use of heavy-handed military operations focused solely on killing insurgents, which she said alienated the population and created more insurgents. "I can go back and enhance the military's understanding," she said, "so that we don't make the same mistakes we did in Iraq."

But as I saw in Khost, U.S. Army procedures in Afghanistan are pretty close to best-practice counterinsurgency doctrine. We are now stationing our troops in district centers—like American county seats—with just a couple of platoons living alongside and training Afghan National Army and National Police. During my embed, Major Kohn explained how strategies pioneered by his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Scotty Custer—especially stationing platoons in district centers—were part of the reason for Khost's progress in 2007, and were being copied all over Afghanistan. I visited one of these district centers, Tani, where Major Kohn had built sturdy stone barracks for 60 American soldiers in two months for just $80,000. ("They have great plans on the Internet," he said.) In Khost and Laghman Provinces, I saw that our soldiers do frequent patrols, mainly mounted in Humvees but also some dismounted, including trips nearly every night to spot suspicious activity (IED-planting).

Most of all, our officers meet with Afghans, who love talking and love meetings. Until you have sat through a

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two- to four-hour village or district shura you do not know the meaning of tedium. This is what the very capable commanders I trailed in Laghman and Khost spend most of their time doing, and as a result they have largely succeeded in getting the local power structure on board in the eastern part of Afghanistan.

The one area where I thought our troops needed help was in language skills. We have translators in Afghanistan, but they are of highly varying quality. I met one, an Afghan-American, who seemed able both to translate speakers' words and to explain their context. But the majority I saw—Afghans under 25 who had a local university degree, if that—had an inadequate command of English and lacked maturity, experience, and judgment.

At a meeting I attended in July in Mehtar Lam, the capital of Laghman Province, between American officers, representatives from the State Department and USAID, and Laghman's Provincial Development Council, none of the Americans was aware of a crucial dynamic. About a third of the Afghans on the Council, an advisory body elected province-wide, were speaking Dari (the Afghan dialect of Persian) and the rest Pashto; the governor spoke exclusively in Pashto, and almost all of the Afghans translated their own remarks into English rather than the other local language.

When I asked one of the Afghans about this afterward, he said, "We Pashto speakers all understand Persian, but the Persian speakers do not understand Pashto. Same culture, same religion—why is this? We sometimes say they are not as intelligent as we are." This made me want to ask some basic questions, which the Americans would certainly have asked had they known about the linguistic divide: How do the Dari and Pashto speakers in this province look at each other? Is it true that the Dari speakers don't speak Persian? (I found this hard to believe in a majority-Pashto area.) How do they compete for or share power? How is influence divided up in the province between them?

But none of the Army's translators thought to tell their bosses that they were listening to two different languages or that the governor wouldn't speak Dari. The under-briefed Americans had assumed that all the locals were native Pashto speakers.

I also found that the American team had no idea how the provincial notables were related. Family is everything in Afghanistan, and Afghans often have a hundred first cousins, who can be close allies or bitter enemies. But genealogical charts of provincial bigwigs are not available either at Mehtar Lam or in Major Kohn's Maneuver Command. A U.S. Army translator at the meeting in Mehtar Lam casually mentioned to me that his father was a provincial minister, which made me wonder about his biases, and about the kinship relations between the 30 or so Afghans in the meeting.

While Dari and Pashto were offered on an elective basis to reservists training at Fort Bragg, soldiers said the classes were poorly taught and held at either 5 A.M. or 8 P.M.—with 12 hours of maneuvers in between. Language classes aren't offered on either Mehtar Lam or Salerno bases, and though several officers I met were studying Pashto or Farsi, it's the enlisted men who are regularly seeing ordinary Afghans.

Sadly, from what I saw, the HTT isn't ready to solve our troops' language and cultural problems. At Khost, the so-called cultural expert was an Iranian-born female officer whom I will call "Sharifa."

Sending an Iranian Farsi speaker to a Pashtun region of Afghanistan didn't seem like a great idea to me. The two languages are written in the same alphabet and share some vocabulary, particularly the more abstract words of Arabic derivation, but they split apart more than 2,000 years ago and are grammatically distinct. I was able to understand maybe 10 percent of the Pashto I heard in meetings and interviews, and could tell if people were discussing, say, security or weapons, but not what they were saying about them.

Sharifa insisted, "There are a lot of Farsiwans [Farsi speakers] here in Khost," but a bit of online research corroborated what locals told me: The province is 99.9 percent Pashto-speaking. The more educated people will understand Farsi, or more accurately Dari, the Afghan dialect, the language of Afghanistan's court, government, and universities, but it is not what they speak at home. As the country's biggest single ethnic group, comprising 40 percent of the population, Pashtuns feel linguistically sidelined by the dominance of Dari and don't particularly enjoy speaking it.

Nor do Afghans necessarily like Iranians. They tend to view them as Midwesterners circa 1930 might have regarded Englishmen: more sophisticated, yes, but also suspiciously smooth, possibly effeminate, likely laughing at them behind their backs.

Sending a non-Pashto-speaking Iranian to interview in a Pashtun village, then, is not just daft, like sending a non-English speaking Spaniard to cozy up to an Iowa farmer. It's apt to be resented. And if the HTT needs interpreters, it's hard to see how they are getting closer to the people or learning more than a smart American officer who's done some homework.

Then there is the issue of sending *female* non-Pashto speakers to bond with male village elders. "They see you as a soldier, not as a female," "Sharifa" said to me. In the *Christian Science Monitor* piece, "Tracy" went further:

> "In most circumstances, I am 'third' gender," says Tracy, who can give only her first name. She says that she is not seen as either an Afghan woman or a Western one—

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because of her uniform. "It has enhanced any ability to talk to [Afghans]. There is a curiosity."

Well, a two-headed American would also attract the curiosity of Afghans, but that doesn't mean they would be eager to welcome him into their community. Afghanistan is one of the most strictly gender-segregated societies on earth, and while women can be of immense use in obtaining the confidences of Afghan *women*—particularly senior women who hold the reins of power in the family and know all the gossip—they simply can't be as effective in meeting with male elders in rural areas.

Sending a non-Pashto-speaking Iranian to interview in a Pashtun village is not just daft, it's apt to be resented. And if the HTT needs interpreters, it's hard to see how they are getting closer to the people or learning more than a smart American officer who's done some homework.

An eccentric flag-raising in Tani District

Before spending $40 million of taxpayers' money on the Human Terrain Teams, there are two questions to ask: Does the concept of a Human Terrain Team answer a real need on the part of our commanders? And how well does the program as it now exists answer this need? My answer to the second question should be obvious by now. The first question is the more important one. Is a lack of cultural awareness foiling our mission in Afghanistan?

On the admittedly slim evidence of my embed, I would say that it is not, but that more education and institutional memory would certainly help. But these could and should be provided during the predeployment training the Army is paying for anyway.

"From a cultural perspective our predeployment training was a complete failure," Kohn told me. "Afghanistan is the Super Bowl for Civil Affairs, there's a ton we can do here, but at Ft. Bragg they trained us just to stay alive in a different theater." Staff Sergeant David Escobar, also of the Civil Affairs unit, added, "We had about one half-hour class about Afghanistan and a month of classes on Iraq."

Something else our soldiers could use is an online database on the areas they are deploying to. This would include genealogies and family relationship information for as many provincial notables as possible. Is the local education chief the brother-in-law of the uncooperative police commander in a troublesome district? Well then maybe we can offer the education head help for the schools, with the express desire that he bring the police commander into the fold. That's how things get done in Afghanistan, but if you don't know the family relationships you can't manipulate them.

On July 28 at Salerno, I was told that the HTT is not producing a database because the units they worked with did not want one; instead "they wanted an angel on their soldier." Major Kohn says he was not aware of any database available for commanders. Yet the *Times* has "Tracy" claiming the contrary. "Along with offering advice to commanders, she said, the five-member team creates a database of local leaders and tribes, as well as social problems, economic issues and political disputes." Thomas Johnson has produced a database, as noted above, which promises to be an excellent resource, though so far it lacks genealogies and kinship information on local leaders.

At the moment, then, the Human Terrain Team, at least in Afghanistan, looks like a solution without a problem. That great lumbering beast, the American Army, may take a long time to change directions, but when it does, it moves swiftly, decisively, and with impressive competence. From what I saw in eastern Afghanistan, we are doing a pretty good job—and the security of these provinces is evidence.

What's going right in Khost doesn't sound like what you read in the papers. And the complaints I did hear from Afghans there, in Nangarhar and in Laghman, weren't about what the media would have you believe Afghans lament—alleged civilian casualties during coalition operations—but rather were about insufficient development aid or poorly executed USAID projects. In Laghman and Khost I saw smart, highly motivated commanders and soldiers well versed in counterinsurgency theory, approaching their tasks with optimism and determination. With better predeployment training, and an institutional commitment to language learning, I have no doubt they—and the Afghan people—will bring security to Afghanistan. ♦

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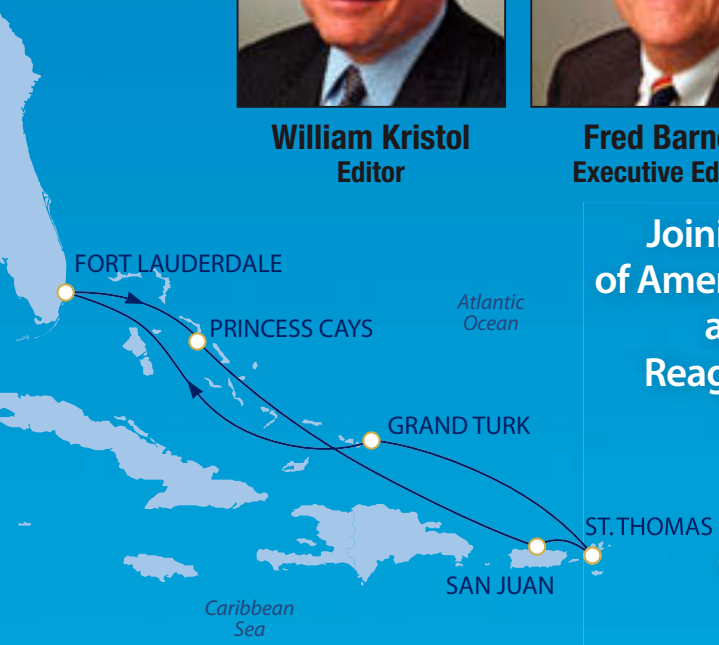

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Roy Cohn, Joseph McCarthy, New York, 1954

BETTMANN / CORBIS

McCarthy=Bad

But the truth is more complicated BY ROBERT D. NOVAK

McCarthyism, *n.* **1.** the practice of making accusations of disloyalty, esp. of pro-Communist activity, in many instances unsupported by proof or based on slight, doubtful, or irrelevant evidence. **2.** unfairness in investigative technique.—*Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989).

M. Stanton Evans is a conservative who has been highly esteemed for nearly half-a-century as a journalist, author, and teacher. But his seventh book is not likely to be greeted by undiluted approbation, even from fellow conservatives. That's because Evans has assumed a Sisyphean task. He writes that "the real Joe McCarthy has vanished into the mists of fable and recycled error, so that it takes the equivalent of a dragnet search to find him. This book is my attempt to do so."

A rehabilitation of Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy is something like an attempt to unveil the sterling qualities of Caligula, Attila, or Torquemada. But none of these famous villains spawned an "ism" worthy of a dictionary definition. "McCarthyism" is ingrained in the contemporary political lexicon, used so frequently—by conservatives as well as liberals—that it is no longer necessary to define its meaning.

Blacklisted by History
The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies
by M. Stanton Evans
Crown Forum, 672 pp., $29.95

In the 2006 campaign, Newt Gingrich compared attacks on Sen. George Allen in Virginia to McCarthyism. The *Boston Globe* said the 2006 campaign by the Republican candidate for Massachusetts governor "has a flavor of McCarthyism." In March of this year, conservative radio talker Glenn Beck said an attack on him by MSNBC's left-wing Keith Olbermann "smacks of the same McCarthyism [Edward R.] Murrow fought so valiantly against." In August, Rabbi Michael Feinberg called a campaign against an Arabic-themed public school in New York City "the lowest of McCarthyite tactics."

All those comparisons adhere to Webster's dictionary definition, but the aura of McCarthyism is more profound. In his posthumous account of the Korean war (*The Coldest Winter*) David Halberstam writes that "what was to be known as McCarthyism, a powerful new political virus," was spawned by Dean Acheson's maladroit defense of Alger Hiss. At another point, Halberstam refers to "the ugliness of the McCarthy period." Still later, he cites "the ugly fratricidal charges that became known as the McCarthy period." Halberstam dates the start of the "McCarthy period" immediately after Democratic setbacks

Robert D. Novak is the author, most recently, of Prince of Darkness: 50 Years Reporting in Washington.

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in the 1950 midterm elections by an electorate angry over the Korean war, with the reign of fear continuing through the '50s. But isn't this decade renowned for complacency and good feeling, preceding the roaring '60s?

It takes M. Stanton Evans's meticulous investigative journalism to show what Joe McCarthy's short stay on the national stage (a little under five years, from February 1950 to December 1954) really was about. Government officials, from both parties,

> were not eager to have the unvarnished facts about the level of Communist penetration on their watch, and their failure to do much about it, set clearly before the nation. Joe McCarthy ... managed to focus the blazing spotlight of public notice on these issues in a way nobody had ever done before him. He and his charges were viewed in certain quarters as a serious menace to be dealt with quickly, and in most decisive fashion. And so in fact they would be.

Hounded by united Democrats, McCarthy ultimately was done in by the first Republican president in 20 years.

The demonization of McCarthy was essentially a three-part indictment. First, he labeled as security risks and drove from public life officials (especially skilled Foreign Service professionals) whose only sin was liberalism. Second, he accused innocents of being Communists, sometimes in cases of mistaken identity. And third, he degraded the political process by accusing major rivals of treason.

Evans makes a convincing case that McCarthy is innocent on all three counts, and he does so with a painstaking case-by-case approach. The jacket blurb says it took over six years to write *Blacklisted by History*, but in fact, the 73-year-old Evans, born and bred in the conservative movement, has spent his whole career thinking about Joe. A relentless researcher, Evans was frustrated by the mysterious disappearance of government files and even newspaper clippings. But he tracked down much of the missing data, helped immeasurably by the Venona files of decrypted secret Soviet communications and by the new accessibility of both FBI reports and Soviet archives.

McCarthy's oft-stated goal, says Evans, "was to get his suspects *out of the federal government* and its policy-making system." So the book begins by listing 10 senior government officials (the most prominent of whom was the Soviet agent Lauchlin Currie, an executive assistant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt) who, because they were "targets" of McCarthy, "must have been mere innocent victims of his mid-century reign of terror." But, Evans continues, "all these McCarthy cases were right there in the Soviet cables." Venona, plus supporting data from Kremlin archives, shows that "rather than being blameless martyrs, all were indeed Communists, Soviet agents or assets of the KGB, just as McCarthy had suggested."

McCarthy correctly saw a State Department infested with Soviet agents and sympathizers, influencing U.S. foreign policy—in particular, abandonment of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime in China. John Stewart Service, a State Department "China hand," is widely viewed as a top-level martyr driven out of the department by McCarthy's accusations. Evans depicts Service living in the provisional Chinese capital of Chungking during World War II with two Soviet agents. Purportedly an adviser to Chiang, Service was sending reports back to Washington degrading Chiang and extolling Mao Zedong's Communists. Evans has obtained 1,200 pages of Services's dispatches, including one asserting that "the Communist political program is simple democracy ... much more American than Russian."

The most familiar case of supposed mistaken identity by McCarthy—really the only such case—involves an elderly black woman from Washington named Annie Lee Moss, employed by the Army as a code clerk. When McCarthy brought her before his investigative committee, then in its last days, she was identified by the FBI as a Communist party member dealing with classified material to demonstrate faulty security procedures.

Democrats claimed McCarthy had the wrong Annie Lee Moss. But there was no other Annie Lee Moss, Evans makes clear. The woman testifying was a Communist, the Army belatedly admitted, with "party membership book number 37269." But that did not demolish what Evans calls "The Legend of Annie Moss." Her "mistaken identity" has been central in assaults against McCarthy dating from Edward R. Murrow's famous *See It Now* program in 1954 to George Clooney's 2005 panegyric of Murrow, *Good Night and Good Luck*.

The clearest evidence of McCarthy's accusing political rivals of treason is his June 14, 1951, speech in which he said that Gen. George C. Marshall was supporting "a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man"—that is, a Communist conspiracy. (A recent book critical of McCarthy by David M. Oshinsky is sarcastically titled *A Conspiracy So Immense*.) More than John Stewart Service and the China hands, or Annie Lee Moss and her "mistaken identity," that single speech on Marshall is the core of the case for McCarthyism.

Evans lists a few instances of McCarthy at his worst, headed by the Marshall speech—which was actually a journalist's book manuscript handed to McCarthy and impulsively read into the record. Yet even on this issue, Evans says McCarthy had a point. He never accused General Marshall of pro-Communist sentiments, only that he was influenced by Soviet agents and Soviet sympathizers: "Marshall *everywhere* and *always* made wrong decisions or urged mistaken courses."

Readers of *Blacklisted by History* may be surprised by how fastidious and detailed McCarthy was (with the exception of the Marshall speech) in assembling information about security risks in government. Readers are likely to be even more startled by the ferocity of the assault on him by the Truman administration and the unified Democratic majority in the Senate once he emerged from obscurity—in Wheeling, West Virginia, on the night of February 9, 1950—by declaring the existence of Communist security risks in the State Department.

The early stage of the Democratic attempt to destroy McCarthy was led by Sen. Millard E. Tydings of Maryland, a haughty grandee of the then-dominant southern Democratic bloc. Ruthless in hand-to-hand political combat, Tydings is shown by Evans refusing to let

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McCarthy testify, and omitting Republican material from the printed transcript. Tydings brought onto the Senate floor a purported phonograph record of the Wheeling speech, noting that McCarthy allegedly claimed 205 Communists were in the State Department (a number perpetuated in history despite McCarthy's denials and lack of substantiation). Tydings admitted, in a subsequent court proceeding, that the unplayed record was from a McCarthy interview in Denver, not his speech in Wheeling.

Almost immediately after the Wheeling speech, the assault on McCarthy began from fellow senators who hardly knew him, and from Truman administration officials who did not know him at all. That hostility replicated the automatic reaction of the nation's majority political party that Alger Hiss could not have been a spy, that State Department official (and Soviet agent) Lawrence Duggan could not have been a traitor, and that former Communist courier Elizabeth Bentley could not be believed.

"Even among those who at last accepted the guilt of Hiss," Evans writes, "he was usually viewed as an aberration, not the precursor of a species." To accept "a wide-ranging plot consisting of multiple Alger Hisses, as alleged by McCarthy," was "unthinkable. . . . McCarthy was a thorn in the side of the Democratic Party, as the issues of infiltration and security laxness all had their genesis under Roosevelt and Truman."

In death, Harry Truman has been installed in the American pantheon as an intrepid Cold Warrior; but in life, he was a nasty partisan who dismissed reports of Soviet espionage out of fear it might damage his beloved party. Truman promoted a Treasury official named Harry Dexter White to the top U.S. position at the International Monetary Fund, despite repeated FBI warnings (reported by Evans) that White was a Soviet agent. As late as 1956, Truman was denying that Alger Hiss was a Communist spy. It has also been reported that Truman sloughed off a confidential alert which declared that decoded Soviet cable traffic showed the Russians had penetrated the U.S. government.

Dean Acheson, McCarthy's implacable enemy within the Truman administration, reinvented himself after the fact as a fierce anti-Communist. But when he became secretary of state in 1949, Evans writes, Acheson "was known as an advocate of conciliating Moscow, in sharp contrast to hardliners in the diplomatic corps who wanted to take a tough anti-Red stance in the postwar era." Acheson's promise not to turn his back on Alger Hiss was not an aberration.

It "appeared to be the best of times" for McCarthy after the Republican election victory in 1952 gave him the chairmanship of the principal Senate investigating committee. But, says Evans, President Dwight D. Eisenhower "disliked him, intensely, and the feeling would grow more so as the events of 1953 unfolded." An underlying reason was McCarthy's attack on Eisenhower's mentor, George C. Marshall, but their animosity was mutual. To McCarthy, Eisenhower "represented, not systematic change from Roosevelt and Truman, but something closer to continuity."

McCarthy's brief chairmanship was conducted with a care that belies his historical reputation, but the new Republican president in the White House, and the new Democratic leader in the Senate (Lyndon B. Johnson), were ready to pounce in reaction as they awaited the inevitable false move by their prey. It came when McCarthy imprudently picked a fight with the Army over lax security practices, "provoking a constitutional showdown of epic nature between McCarthy and executive branch officials." McCarthy committed what Evans calls "a grievous error" in angrily reacting to the evasiveness, as a witness, of Brig. Gen. Ralph Zwicker, a decorated combat general, by calling him "a tremendous disgrace to the Army."

The principal surviving image of McCarthy comes from the subsequent televised Army-McCarthy hearings (but mainly from *Point of Order*, a film documentary that put him in the worst light). The most memorable incident is the melodramatic performance of Joseph Welch, the Army's counsel for the hearings ("Have you left no sense of decency, sir?"), when McCarthy declared that a Welch law partner had belonged to the Communist-front National Lawyers Guild.

This classic example of McCarthyism, however, is not what it seems: Evans has unearthed a *New York Times* story in which Welch, months earlier, had revealed the lawyer's membership in the Guild as reason for not employing his services in the hearings.

As those hearings, which effectively would end McCarthy's career, were about to begin, Whittaker Chambers wrote a personal letter to his friend and McCarthy's defender, William F. Buckley Jr. Chambers called McCarthy "a political godsend" to the Communists who "*divides* the ranks of the Right" and "scarcely knows what he is doing." Those and similar quotes from the letter have been showcased by liberals for a half-century and, indeed, have helped discredit McCarthy among conservatives.

But Chambers was ambivalent about McCarthy. In the same letter to Buckley, he wrote that "the Senator represents the one force that all shades of the Left really fear. . . . He alone on the Right, at this moment, *visibly* imperils" the Left's "seizure of power." That explains the inexorable assault painstakingly described here by Evans, which succeeded not only in destroying McCarthy but in separating him from anti-Communist followers—like me.

In 1953, a 22-year-old second lieutenant at Fort Devens, Mass., awaiting a possible call to combat in Korea that never came, I was sympathetic to McCarthy, as were most of my fellow officers—until an incident in his feud with the Army. McCarthy publicly criticized Maj. Gen. Perry Reichelderfer for failing, when he was commander of the Fort Monmouth laboratories, to fire an employee who once had attended Communist meetings, and in whose residence were found secret documents. McCarthy identified Reichelderfer as chief of the Army Security Agency (ASA).

My fellow officers and I were so shocked that we instantly changed our outlook on McCarthy. We were assigned to the ASA Training Center at Fort Devens in a building protected

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by barbed wire and security guards. We had been instructed never to tell anybody of our ASA connection. We thought listing General Reichelderfer's ASA command was a security breach, and that demeaning a distinguished officer truly constituted McCarthyism.

More than half-a-century later, it seems to me to be a mistake by McCarthy, but not evidence of any "ism." The combination of forces against Joe McCarthy from the Left, from the news media, from both parties and his own president, had succeeded in aligning people like me against him. Stan Evans has described why we were wrong—because, indeed, McCarthy *was* fighting "a conspiracy so immense." ♦

Tell the Truth

How Asperger's Syndrome is a curse and a blessing.

BY FRANKLIN FREEMAN

"Asperger's is not a disease," John Elder Robison writes in his new memoir. "It's a way of being. There is no cure, nor is there a need for one."

Asperger's syndrome is often described as a mild or high-functioning form of autism. The Austrian physician Hans Asperger first described it in the 1940s, but his work was not widely disseminated until Lorna Wing coined the phrase "Asperger's syndrome" in 1981. According to Tony Attwood, a leading expert on Asperger's, "A lack of social skills, limited ability to have a reciprocal conversation and an intense interest in a particular subject are the core features of this syndrome."

Look Me in the Eye
My Life with Asperger's
by John Elder Robison
Crown, 304 pp., $25.95

At a recent conference Attwood suggested (and he is not alone in this) that some of the world's most famous people might have had (or have) Asperger's: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Albert Einstein, Bela Bartok, Alan Turing, Bill Gates, Thomas Jefferson, Howard Hughes, and Napoleon. I would add G.K. Chesterton as a probable example, as well as the fictional character Wallace Gruner in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*.

Robison's memoir recounts his struggles as a child and adolescent, both with his simultaneously abusive and loving family, and with the mystery of his isolation from other kids. It describes how he slowly learned to communicate with some children, grew absorbed in the study of machines and how they work, and gained the affection of his peers by becoming the class prankster. Brilliant yet failing every subject, Robison dropped out of high school. But having learned on his own how to take apart and modify amplifiers, he soon was making good money working for rock groups, starting with Fat, then Pink Floyd—"the Floyd," as those in the know called it—and KISS.

After teaching Ace Frehley of KISS about the joys of smoking guitars, Robison, who is generous in documenting the group effort involved in the guitar work, finally grew disenchanted with being rich one week and poor the next, and found a job with the Milton Bradley Co. in research and development. Thereafter he worked his way up various corporate ladders, but disliked management, chucked the corporate life, and exploiting his lifelong interest in foreign cars, started a business repairing and restoring European vehicles, including Porsches, Land Rovers, Mercedes, and Rolls-Royces.

Robison did not know he had Asperger's until a therapist friend lent him a book by Tony Attwood. While reading it, the mystery of his life was illuminated. When his father died, Robison was uncharacteristically distraught—not that he didn't have the emotions, but he seldom showed them—and his younger brother, the author of *Running with Scissors*, prodded him into writing an essay about their father. When his brother posted the essay on his website it became its most popular piece. Then his brother told Robison to write a memoir, and he has.

All to the benefit of both those who, like myself, have an Aspergian in their family, and those who don't but who will be moved by a great story. It is filled with hilarious, raucous, shocking, and sad episodes, and insights into the logical thinking of Aspergians. Some of these include discussions of how Aspergians say what they think because they don't understand the social cues that most of us pick up naturally. In one sense, of course, they are refreshingly honest. For instance: "As to the weight [of a person] . . . if [a friend] looks bigger, I'd say, 'You seem fatter than the last time I saw you' . . . If someone looks a lot thinner, I might say, 'You look a lot thinner . . . are you sick?'" An Aspergian has to work hard to learn not to say things like that. Attwood says that children with Asperger's work twice as hard at school: They do the school work, but they also have to work at learning the basic social skills most of us take for granted.

Robison writes, "Asperger's syndrome isn't all bad. It can bestow rare gifts. Some Aspergians have truly extraordinary natural insight into complex problems. An Aspergian child may grow up to be a brilliant engineer or scientist. Some have perfect pitch and otherworldly musical abilities. Many have such exceptional verbal skills that some refer to the condition as Little Professor Syndrome. But don't be misled—most Aspergian kids do not grow up to be college professors. Growing up can be rough."

Look Me in the Eye will help Asperger's children grow up and take some pride in being Aspergians. It can also help Aspergians and their parents, friends, and mates not to drive each other crazy. ♦

Franklin Freeman is a writer in Maine.

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Norris Church Mailer, Norman Mailer, 1989

WIREIMAGE

Captain Hornblower

Norman Mailer, 1923-2007 **BY DAVID GELERNTER**

The Norman Invasion was the talk of New York in the late 1950s and early '60s. Norman Podhoretz gave the definitive brief account of his co-Norman's character and personality in *Ex-Friends*; and it wasn't pretty. But it's fair to point out, nonetheless, that Mailer transformed himself by sheer force of will into one of the best English stylists of the later 20th century and wrote several books that will last. History will show (if it hasn't already) that Podhoretz was the more important Norman by far. But Mailer had his own kind of significance.

For Norman Mailer, writing came easily, but not good writing—and that fact underlies his literary career. He had no facility, and like Cézanne, achieved greatness by a ferocious effort that made every sentence electric. Of course, for Mailer to write something great (or even good) was like bench-pressing 300 pounds: He was rarely up to it, or rarely bothered. But he did write four first-rate books, of which two were masterpieces (and three were generally dismissed). He was a victim of his own premature fame and his lust for celebrity. It's an old story: He blew his horn so loudly and often that when he finally produced novels worth celebrating, the party was over and everyone had gone home.

The Naked and the Dead (1948), which made his reputation, is a loosely written, barely edited account of the Second World War on a South Pacific island (where Mailer himself had fought). Its dense, rambling verbal underbrush accidentally evokes the jungle in which the story takes place. It has some good passages, but how the New York literary world (in its pre-decadent state!) could have seen the hand of a master in this third-rate pile is anybody's guess.

On finding himself a famous author, however, Mailer did a strange thing. In fact, he did many strange things, but the one I have in mind is this: He transformed himself into a superb writer with a memorable, wholly distinctive, voice. Only one of his four finest books was recognized as such at the time; *The Armies of the Night* (1968) is a faintly disgusting account of the most famous, and the largest, antiwar march on the Pentagon, in October 1967, of which Mailer was one of the leaders. The action is ugly and so (in the light of his book) was the author; yet the narrative moves with the rocketing momentum of an IRT express. And Mailer has the saving grace, as he usually did in later years, of not taking himself too seriously and recognizing the pomposity and self-importance that he could laugh at even if he couldn't shake it.

His next three masterpieces were generally ignored or dismissed. But *Of a Fire on the Moon* (1970) is, by far, the best book written about Apollo 11, an event that should have inspired many good books. And by the way, there is nothing condescending or nasty in Mailer's tone when he writes about the American heroes of the moon program. He admired manliness and bravery, even among patriotic Americans. *Ancient Evenings* (1983) was his first great novel, an uncanny evocation of ancient Egypt and a world almost inconceivably foreign. In sheer imaginative power there are few novels to compare to it in the 20th century, or any century, but few seemed to care. Yet it was a smash hit compared with his greatest work, *Harlot's Ghost* (1991), a thousand-page novel about the CIA. (And once again, where you would expect the wacko-leftist Mailer to be hostile or patronizing, he isn't.) At the end of *Harlot's Ghost* the action stops in the middle, with the mystery of Harlot's death unsolved. Mailer promised to write a second installment, but Part One was so widely disliked, it's no surprise that he never got around to it.

In *Harlot's Ghost*, Mailer's prose reaches maturity at last. It is brilliant and commanding, sometimes poetic, even majestic. (Read the account, toward the beginning, of a near-accident on an icy road.) *Harlot's Ghost* is loosely structured, and like many of Mailer's books, needs pruning as much as a leggy rosebush. But with all its faults, it will stand among the best American novels of the 20th century.

It's true, of course, that Mailer had the disconcerting habit of regularly issuing awful books; his career was as poorly edited as his novels. His Picasso biography (1995) was bad enough, but his retelling of the Gospel story (1997) was so inept it is painful even to think about. As a prominent American he did little for America; as a prominent Jew he did little for the Jews. But at his best he was as funny as Philip Roth, as lyrically evocative as John Updike, as thoughtful and profoundly observant as Saul Bellow—and at his *very* best was better than any of them. And now that he is dead, his very best is what counts. ♦

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The French Connection

Paris and Algiers pulled Camus in different directions.

BY ROGER KAPLAN

David Carroll's dual purpose here is to rescue the reputation of Albert Camus from academicians who have consigned him to the ash heap of dead white males, while enlisting him in the opposition to the Iraq war. While there may be some usefulness in laboriously examining the way a modern master uses the weapons of the spirit to write on such weighty matters as justice, this book demonstrates the risks inherent in assigning a writer political positions that, at best, are hypothetical.

Albert Camus the Algerian
Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice
by David Carroll
Columbia, 256 pp., $29.50

Would Camus have opposed the war on terrorism and the methods that have been used to wage it? How can anyone know? He died in 1960, and at the time everyone who knew him viewed him, for a reason, as a partisan of the effort to defeat the Algerian nationalists, whose terrorism he deplored and denounced. He also deplored and denounced anti-terrorism methods used by the French army, and he was an anticolonialist. For this, armchair experts accuse him of ambivalence, at best, or at worst, "objective" support for the colonialist side. Carroll is quite right to say that this is to miss the point about Camus's moral stance, and for that matter his political stance. But to turn him into some kind of plague-on-both-houses neo-Tolstoyan by projecting him into contemporary affairs, as Carroll does, is to miss the point as well.

Albert Camus was the French novelist and essayist who, along with Jean-Paul Sartre and a few others, represented the postwar Existentialist movement. His novel *The Stranger* is the emblematic work of that movement, the way *The Sun Also Rises* represents the Lost Generation and *The Great Gatsby* represents the Jazz Age. Fully integrated into the canon of 20th-century letters, Camus became a problem for the academic thought police because of positions he took during the Algerian war of independence (1954-62). To my own considerable astonishment, I learn that such authorities as Conor Cruise O'Brien and Edward Said view Camus as an apologist for colonialism, perhaps even a racist. According to Carroll, who teaches French and Italian literature at UC Irvine, this view is not unanimous: Michael Walzer of Princeton, for example, maintains that Camus was "a good man in a bad time" and defends his writings.

It is not news that Camus was in the thick of controversies. I always imagined, however, that these took place in the circles of those French intellectuals that my mother and father frequented in what I think of as the Cold War years (ending with the outbreak of hot war in Korea). More exactly, those circles frequented—hung out, we might say today—around my parents because their apartment was heated and they had access to cigarettes and whiskey. Controversies spilled over into reviews, whose circulation was tiny, and thence into the Paris press and beyond.

It is not unusual for academics living in Princeton or UC Irvine to care about arguments that took place in Paris a half-century or more ago. That is what the history of ideas is about. What I find odd is that the contemporary argument should be so skewed. If I read Carroll correctly, erudite professors are assigning to Camus ideas and attitudes that are not his. Yet it's not as if we were dealing with obscure and difficult texts: Camus wrote plainly, and his work lives in neat, elegant editions put out faithfully by the house where he worked, Gallimard. There are still plenty of people around—like my old dad and his pal, Joseph Frank, whom Carroll and his friends could easily consult since he shuttles between Princeton and Stanford—who *were there* (not that this is always a recommendation for accuracy) and could tell them *what-for.*

But isn't this precisely the problem? Camus, my father used to say (and Joe concurring), was less friendly than some of these other literary derelicts, like Sartre, because he always felt he was being misunderstood. *Le problème est ailleurs*, he would say, brow furrowed and eyes turning somber, *you don't get it.* Personally, I always thought Camus was difficult to misunderstand: He sought clarity and pursued a kind of "measure," even-handedness, which he took from the Greeks whom he studied for his never-completed doctorate. Sartre wrote very well, too; but Camus, who kept a hand in journalism all his life, was always far more persuasive. He made reasonable arguments; Sartre tended toward insult, invective.

Camus, always a man of the left and not especially friendly toward the American position in the Cold War, or the strategy of containment with its essential military component, saw Stalinism for what it was. Some of the others saw it for what they wanted it to be. But it was during the Algerian war that matters went from very bad to really awful, because Sartre and his friends, who knew very little about Algeria, decided that Camus and his friends, wife, mother, uncles, etc.—who, of course, really *were* Algerians—did not know anything and were playing into the hands of reactionary racist colonialist . . . dogs, as Sartre called them. It was awful.

Most of the French political class, led by the Socialists who happened to be in power at the time, supported the suppression of the armed revolt against French rule in Algeria. It was 1954 and, having been driven from Indochina, the

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French knew that decolonization was in the air. But *l'Algérie*, as Minister of Justice François Mitterrand insisted, *c'est la France*. Administratively and politically, he was right: Algeria comprised three *departements* of France. But as Camus had been saying since the late 1930s, when he wrote a famous reportage for the Communist *Alger-Républicain* newspaper on the oppression and misery of the Muslim population, this was *wrong*. It was not fair. You had a de facto colonial situation, and you had to fix it by giving full political equality to the Muslims.

Which the settlers could not conceive of doing. Most of the settlers, like Camus's family, were very poor. The conventional wisdom among Paris intellectuals was that they were parasitical plantation owners—*gros colons*; but that was a myth. There were some big landowners, of course, and there were farmers who had worked very hard to drain the swamps of the Mitidja valley and turn it into a citrus paradise. Algeria was sun-drenched, beautiful, sensual, and hard at the same time, and most of its inhabitants were poor.

Camus's position was that there were several populations in Algeria, and simple justice required they be taken into account when accounts were settled. At the outset of the armed revolt in 1954, for example, he asked why there should be an "Arab nation" in that land, as the National Liberation Front demanded. In its name, *Front de Libération Nationale*, the feminine of *national* is required because it is the liberation which is national, not the front. The FLN, like its predecessor organization led by Messali Hadj, posited a national entity to be liberated, and it claimed this was an Algerian homeland (*patrie*) within the Arab *umma*. But Camus asked: Why the Arabs? Why not the Kabyles, or the Berbers, more generally? Why not the Jews? Or, for that matter, the Maltese, the Spaniards—the French?

Hence the *malentendu*—not getting it—that Camus struggled to overcome during these years when he had to worry every day about whether his mother was boarding a bus that was about to explode. He thought that those who, from the safety of the cafés, used grand words like colonialism and freedom, and constructed their perfect worlds with other people's lives, didn't get it. And not getting it in a war can be a serious matter—justice in contradiction with itself. That is why he said, angrily at a press conference when he received the Nobel Prize, that between justice (equality for all in Algeria) and his mother, he would choose his mother.

Albert Camus

KATHERINE EASTLAND

The café crowd gave him hell for that one. Carroll twists it, out of his sincere love of Camus, to mean that killing his mother would have been an injustice, so therefore, and so on. And of course, that is so. But we have to be clear: Camus, a realistic man who had seen life up close in the slums of Belcourt and in the cruelties of the Nazi occupation, meant what he said. Justice can wait, if it's my mother's life that pays for it.

I happen to be gazing at the old coffee shop at the angle of the Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Rue Bonaparte as I write this. Sartre's office was around the corner, which is why the joint became a hangout and, eventually, a landmark. It's not a bad place—nice booths, but steep prices—and I am up on the fourth floor in a little place across the street asking my old dad, who lives here, whether any of this matters. He shakes his head in despair at my habit of asking stupid questions. He is about to be given a very high honor by the French Republic for his labors in making people like Sartre and Camus known to Americans. I do not ask whether any of that mattered, digging my hole deeper; but *today*, does it matter?

I turn to Joe and Guigitte Frank, who thought they were going to spend a quiet afternoon at my father's and not get drawn into old polemics. But their years of teaching have made them more patient, and Joe offers an answer: *It matters to anyone who still reads*, he says. So I offer him a sample of David Carroll's prose:

> The "Algerian in Camus," in the sense I am using the term, does not, however, constitute an "Algerian identity" that would define Camus; it is rather the locus of a problem, of a split or conflict of national cultural and political identities that is expressed in his writings in various ways.

Joe winces. My father's brows turn up in genuine surprise. He fell out of touch with the university world when he went overseas for long decades of service to our country. It gets worse:

> The Algerian in Camus is also an important component of his agnosticism, of his determined resistance to political and religious doctrines, systems, and ideas, the side of him that maintains a distance from—and a complicated, oppositional relationship with—national, religious, cultural, ethnic, and political identities, the side that resists oneness, sameness, uniformity, and all expressions of absolute truth.

Carroll is a good man. He is trying to

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French paratroopers and French Algerians, 1961

BETTMANN / CORBIS

do the right thing. But why not just say that Camus was confused? Which would be factually mistaken, but it would at least be clear. Camus was not confused and he had no identity problems, if that's what Carroll is trying to say. He had, to be sure, a complicated personal life, some of which took place in the streets around here; but that is a different matter entirely. He was Algerian—of course he was Algerian, *français d'Algérie*—and that was never an issue; but in the academy it seems to have become an issue.

Carroll takes us through several of Camus's key books, including *The Stranger* and *The Plague*, to mutilate those who would make Camus an apologist for the colonial regime. In doing this, Carroll misinterprets almost as grossly as they falsify. I learn in *Albert Camus the Algerian* that there is a "post-colonial" school of literary criticism which posits that *The Stranger* is racist because the Arab victim of the anti-hero Meursault has no name. Or that the plague in *The Plague* is a metaphor for the de facto apartheid in Algeria because there are no Arabs in the fictional Oran (Algeria's western capital) where the story is set.

Carroll argues, on the contrary, that Meursault is "the other" and is executed as "an Arab and a Jew." *The Plague*, he says, by omitting the Arabs, is really an attack on colonial segregation. The first thing you notice about *The Stranger* is its title. Meursault's problem is existential. As to *The Plague*, Camus—who knew there was a vicious strain of anti-Semitism among the often pro-Vichy *pieds-noirs*, notably in Oran—made it very clear that he was writing a parable of the Nazi occupation of Europe and the duty to resist evil.

Camus's journalism during the Algerian war, mainly in the form of editorial commentary collected in 1958 in the slim volume *Chroniques algériennes*, sought to separate the combatants. His position was that the cycles of terror and repression played into the hands of the extremists on both sides, which seems obvious enough in retrospect. He was sensible and reasonable. However, it took only a few people who were not sensible or reasonable, but who had access to bombs, to render his position irrelevant.

I assume this is where Carroll thinks his book can be read with profit by someone with no particular interest in French literature or Algerian history. But can the Algerian controversies serve as lessons for today's war in Iraq? More specifically, Carroll, in one overwrought sentence, asks why George W. Bush did not read Camus before starting all the trouble: It would have sharpened his sense of justice. But I have the impression that, as a matter of fact, the president *did* read Camus somewhere along the way.

The present situation in Iraq, Carroll writes, bears some resemblance to the situation Camus commented on with futile good sense and goodwill. Perhaps. We are presently engaged in operations in Iraq, allied with some Iraqis against others who are themselves supported by a Muslim *internationale*. Many Muslims are opposed to this *internationale*, which wants our ruin and their destruction. In the end, though, the only question in conflicts like this is who shall have power locally. The French army and government always had a problem in that the settler "tribe" was adamant about not wanting to share power while the FLN was adamant that its core leadership would monopolize power, Leninist-style.

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In these circumstances, the hearts-and-minds strategies that the army tried, with occasional success, were like spitting in the wind. Camus was considered naive at best, a traitor at worst, by *pied-noir* public opinion, and would probably be called a wimp today by Muslim nationalists. In a (successful) strategy of cutting off and starving the insurgents while they hunted them down, the French took the battle to Egypt during the Suez expedition, and sealed off the borders with Tunisia and Morocco. I don't know if this is germane to the geography of Mesopotamia; it is true, though, that the French army took a few years to find winning tactics.

Simply projecting from what Camus said about terror and torture, he would surely have condemned people who set off bombs in marketplaces and mosques. He would have opposed the ill-treatment of prisoners, while seeking to know whether such ill-treatment was systemic or an aberration. On the strategy of choosing Iraq as a battlefield in a larger war, there is no point in speculating: He was not keen on military solutions. But he never said the French army was wrong to defend the civilian population in Algeria. Maybe he would have felt the same way about the American, British, and Iraqi forces battling marketplace killers—maybe not. But what motivated his attitude toward Algeria was that his people lived there.

Would he think the U.S. Army should stay out of the sectarian and tribal conflicts tearing Iraq apart? The doctor in *The Plague* views his duty as a call to act in a seemingly hopeless situation. Camus probably did not take the full measure of Algerian national sentiment, which united Arabs and Berbers, liberal nationalists like Ferhat Abbas (whom Camus respected), Leninists and proto-Islamists, against the French. What would he have thought of our attempt to encourage such sentiment in the geographical expression called Iraq? Would he have blamed us for unleashing the dogs of civil war in a once-united Iraq by leaving a power vacuum after removing the tyrant who held it together by terror?

Forty-seven years after his death, no one can say. ♦

Talk About Movies

Watching and listening at the Virginia Film Festival.

BY SONNY BUNCH

Charlottesville, Virginia

Logistically speaking, I was expecting this year's Virginia Film Festival to be a nightmare. Tucked in between the rolling hills of central Virginia and the sprawling horse farms of Albemarle County, Charlottesville played host to some 60 events in a half-dozen locations sprinkled throughout a city with increasingly congested thoroughfares and minimal public transportation. Not to mention the tens of thousands of football fans expected to roll into town on that first November weekend to see the 23rd-ranked University of Virginia Cavaliers take on the 24th-ranked Wake Forest Demon Deacons.

But I was pleasantly surprised, both by the ease of movement around the university and its environs and by the impressive program that the organizers had thrown together. Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the Virginia Film Festival pulled off its usual trick of mixing classics and new releases to create a filmgoing experience at which any cinephile can find something to enjoy.

"We are absolutely unique," the festival's artistic director, Richard Herskowitz, explains. "There is no other film festival that has our particular kind of intellectual and educational emphasis." Unlike Tribeca or Cannes, film festivals in which the art of procuring a big distribution deal is just as important as the art projected onto the screen, Herskowitz's festival is all about the movies.

Each year, the festival is tailored to fit a theme; this year's was "Kin Flicks: Families in Film." And each year, one of the key draws is the number and quality of speakers that Herskowitz and his staff lure to Charlottesville to educate filmgoers about the productions they have just seen. For years Roger Ebert was dedicated to the festival, running shot-by-shot workshops on films as diverse as Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup* and Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*; he also served as chief interviewer of the cinematic luminaries in attendance. Since illness has forced Ebert to cut down on public appearances, David Edelstein, lead reviewer of *New York* magazine, has assumed the role of grand inquisitor.

An impressive array of filmmakers make the trek to engage with audiences on films both old and new. Tamara Jenkins, writer/director of 1998's *Slums of Beverly Hills* and this year's Oscar-buzzy *The Savages*, was on hand to present those pictures and a rare treat: her short film, *Family Remains*. Stewart Stern, the screenwriter behind James Dean's seminal tale of teenage angst, *Rebel Without a Cause*, was also on hand to conduct a shot-by-shot workshop on that 1955 classic. Though his long, frequently off-topic, Grandpa Simpson-style answers forced many of the shots to be skipped, some very interesting facts and insights about Dean's contribution to the film could be gleaned.

The discussions and workshops were nice appetizers, but the real meat here was the lineup of features. Worry crept in when my weekend viewing schedule didn't get off to the greatest start. I took in a screening of *Killer of Sheep* on Friday, a film I've been hearing about for years but never had a chance to see. *Sheep* is a student film shot some 30 years ago and universally hailed as both a lost classic and one of the pre-eminent examples of African-American cinema—something of an indictment of the dearth of quality African-American films. Director Charles Burnett

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summed up my feelings when he told the audience afterwards that his film "wasn't made to be entertaining." I was not thrilled to be informed of this fact *after* spending 90 minutes watching ham-handed metaphors brought to life by a largely nonprofessional cast in an exquisitely trying style best described as Watts Neorealism.

But the evening's double feature more than made up for that tedium. First up was *Persepolis*, a French animated feature about an Iranian expatriate—a tale of youthful rebellion set to the music of Iron Maiden that begins with the fall of the shah and runs through the Iran/Iraq war. Throw a coming-of-age story, together with a tale of international political intrigue, into a martini shaker, shake vigorously, and pour. It was easily the highlight of the festival—for me, at any rate—and if there is justice in the world, *Persepolis* should have a decent shot at an Oscar either for animated feature or foreign language film.

With any luck, both.

Following *Persepolis*, a choice needed to be made: Travel across town to get hectored about the evils of the Iraq war by the director of *Battle for Haditha*, or stick around the theater I was already in for Sidney Lumet's latest project, *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*. It was a more difficult call than you might think; Lumet, after all, hasn't made anything of note since 1976's *Network*. But the 83-year-old director won out, and the right call was almost certainly made. *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead* is fantastic. A tightly wound thriller that jumps around chronologically—in the vernacular, it was Tarantinoesque—Lumet's latest features Philip Seymour Hoffman playing a psychotic Michael Corleone to Ethan Hawke's Fredo, while Marisa Tomei channels her inner Sharon Stone to reveal more of herself to the audience than ever before.

As you might expect from any festival hosted by a major university, there was the requisite political correctness. "Part of what precipitated the choice of the theme was the passage of the marriage amendment last year in the state of Virginia," Herskowitz told me, adding, "One of the first thoughts that came to my mind was 'well, [marriage] may be resolved in the legislative realm, but it's not resolved in the cultural realm.' The cultural and the cinematic realm can't stop making films questioning what family is, and what kind of alternative families exist."

Things were similarly silly at the "Women in Film" panel. As the six speakers prattled on to an audience of 14 (at least two of whom, besides me, were journalists), questions from my subconscious about priorities in life began floating to the surface. "Women still earn 60 cents on the dollar," one female filmmaker (inaccurately) claimed, and that nagging little voice finally snapped: "Bunch, are you really missing a college game between two Top 25 teams, one of which is your alma mater, literally taking place down the street, in order to listen to this nonsense?"

I didn't have an answer—not a good one, anyway—but that voice quieted a little once I got back to the business of the weekend: watching movies. My final screening for Saturday evening was probably the most important event of the festival, a showing of *Romance and Cigarettes*, followed by a question-and-answer session between the film's director, John Turturro, and David Edelstein.

The musical revolves around a cheating husband (James Gandolfini) and his relationship with his long-suffering wife (Susan Sarandon). A post-partum Kate Winslet shows up as a bodacious temptress, Christopher Walken shows up as, well, Christopher Walken, and Turturro directs the film with a firm and loving hand. *Romance and Cigarettes* verges on the experimental, a toned-down version of Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* set in the suburbs of New Jersey.

"It's a hard film to watch without an audience," Turturro told Edelstein. "If you watch it from a distance, it's a much harder film to watch." And he was not far off. The comforting sound of others enjoying the spectacle allowed a deeper immersion than might have been possible watching the film in isolation. And the audience made a difference in my enjoyment for one crucial, totally accidental, reason. While watching the film, I noticed Herskowitz squatting next to me. When he stood up, I realized that he had been talking to Turturro, who was catching the flick as if he were just another member of the audience, sitting one row up and across the aisle from me.

Watching John Turturro watch his film, seeing him laugh along with a theater full of fellow patrons, clearly enjoying his creation as much as a crowd experiencing it for the first time—these are the moments of which great festivals are made. ♦

Monster Mash

A new, improved Beowulf for the 21st century.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

From the dawn of the motion picture era, Hollywood has felt no compunction about taking liberties with literary classics. A 1929 silent featured this immortal credit: "The Taming of the Shrew, by William Shakespeare. Additional Dialogue by Sam Taylor." The 1939 *Wuthering Heights* has a happy ending, with Catherine and Heathcliff enjoying a ghostly embrace on their beloved moors. In the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* (scripted in part by Aldous Huxley), Lady Catherine De Bourgh's withering cross-examination of Lizzie Bennet is transformed into a sweetly humorous test of Lizzie's love for Lady Catherine's nephew Darcy. In his hilarious nonfiction account of 20th Cen-

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tury Fox, *The Studio*, John Gregory Dunne quoted a producer preparing a new version of *A Christmas Carol*: "Dickens was a terrible writer. He doesn't tell you why Scrooge is mean. We go into all that, with the unhappy childhood."

But never, in the annals of motion picture history, has an adaptation of a great work been run through the shredder quite as thoroughly as *Beowulf* is in this lavish and technically astounding new version—a combination of live action and computer animation directed by Oscar-winner Robert Zemeckis.

Grendel

PARAMOUNT PICTURES AND SHANGRI-LA ENTERTAINMENT, LLC.

"Frankly, nothing about the original poem appealed to me," Zemeckis has said, a remark that suggests he might not have been the best person to make a film version of it. But no matter, because Zemeckis discovered to his delight that the screenplay he was given "explored deeper into the text, looking between the lines, questioning the holes in the source material." In his estimation, the script—written by a fantasy novelist who wrote the *Sandman* comic books and a screenwriter who helped come up with the concept for Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*—actually *improves* on one of the oldest surviving Anglo-Saxon works of literature.

"They managed to keep the essence of the poem," says Zemeckis, "but made it more accessible to a modern audience and made some revolutionary discoveries along the way." Ah, yes: revolutionary discoveries. Like devising a plotline that turns *Beowulf* into an attack on . . . Beowulf. Imagine a movie called *The Torah* that tells the story of creation from the perspective of Christopher Hitchens, and you might get a sense of the rather shocking transformation that takes place here.

Rather than being the world's greatest and bravest hero, as he is in the poem, the Beowulf of Zemeckis's film is a puffed-up and vainglorious liar who sells his soul and manhood for power—and the promise that his repugnant behavior will be whitewashed forever by a hagiographic poem dedicated to his glory. The *Epic of Beowulf* is, in the estimation of the movie version of *Beowulf*, a tissue of lies. Beowulf knows this all too well. His final words are: "It's too late for lies." But he dies before he can correct the record. So the "revolutionary discoveries" made by the screenwriters of *Beowulf* include the fact that the *Epic of Beowulf* is a travesty. The true story of Beowulf is that (to quote the film) "there are no heroes anymore" and "men are the real monsters."

Beowulf
Directed by Robert Zemeckis

I don't want to sound pious about the original, a work that has tortured English majors and lovers of literature in general for untold centuries—forced by sadistic masters giggling into their beards to try to make sense of its incomprehensible Anglo-Saxon. Even when translated into modern English by a superior poet like Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf* is a chore, since it does not have a narrative line but rather is a seriatim account of three hand-to-hand confrontations over the course of 50 years between the warrior Beowulf and three terrifying supernatural creatures: first, the man-eating giant Grendel, then Grendel's mother, and finally a fire-spewing dragon.

The storyline devised by the two screenwriters, Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary, finds a perversely clever way to weave it all together. The unifying glue is Grendel's mother, who is not a monstrous hag of the deep but a Circe-like sea demon embodied by Angelina Jolie. She is a Satanic temptress who seduces men into impregnating her with the promise of granting them worldly power. Grendel is the issue of her liaison with Hrothgar (Anthony Hopkins), and as a result of that tryst, Hrothgar has been rendered infertile. Eventually, she pulls the same trick on Beowulf (Ray Winstone) after he slays Grendel, and their offspring is the dragon whom Beowulf is forced to fight after serving as king for 50 years.

Power corrupts and destroys. Heroism is only the result of good public relations. Glory is a sham. Oh, and poor Grendel is a developmentally delayed sufferer from a skin condition that only attacks people because they make too much noise.

Whatever this is, it isn't *Beowulf*; it is, rather, *Beowulf* in reverse. The Beowulf of the poem has no characteristics *but* his heroism: his overpowering strength, his physical bravery, his cleverness in battle, his undying honor, and his love of glory.

The poem endures because of its exploration of these noble qualities and because of its two primal tropes. First is that the force attempting to avenge Grendel's death is his grieving mother, who is even more powerful and frightening than any avenging male might be. The second is that it ends with an old Beowulf recapturing the glory of his youth by slaying the dragon—and losing his life in the process. Rather than bemoaning the tissue of lies his legend has become, as in the film, Beowulf says on his deathbed that he never plotted a quarrel, nor swore an unjust oath, and takes joy in these accomplishments. In the film, by slaying the dragon, Beowulf commits the worst of all his crimes, since the dragon is his own son.

This travesty of *Beowulf* is an epic not for the ages but for the Bush administration. For what is Robert Zemeckis's Beowulf but Hollywood's vision of George W. Bush—a blowhard warmonger and craver of riches who reaches the summit of power through illegitimate means and has built his career on deceit? That's all well and good, but was it really necessary for medieval scribes to spend hundreds of years keeping the tale of *Beowulf* alive through the Dark Ages so that their precious handiwork could be turned into the source material for the animated equivalent of a Keith Olbermann rant? ♦

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"The tape of the [Clinton campaign] event shows that the question and answer went as follows:

Question: 'As a young person, I'm worried about the long-term effects of global warming. How does your plan combat climate change?'

Clinton: 'Well, you should be worried. You know, I find as I travel around Iowa that it's usually young people that ask me about global warming.'

The campaign's admission that it planted the question may be another blow to the New York senator's image as a trustworthy politician."

—Major Garrett, Fox News, November 10

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Mark, here are some of the Q&A's we can rehearse with HRC for her New Hampshire town meeting on Thursday.

Middle-aged white female: Senator Clinton, we're an ordinary working American family, and in this economy, my husband and I feel like we're running on a treadmill, or just keeping our heads above water. What do you plan to do to help America's middle class?
HRC: Hey, that's a great question, and by the way, I want to thank you and your husband for working hard and playing by the rules. *(Applause)* And let me tell you something: Our comprehensive plan for economic reform and fair taxation is aimed straight at the pocketbooks of America's working families, not the top one percent. *(Applause)*

Elderly white male: Senator Clinton, as a veteran and a senior citizen, I'm living on a fixed income, and every day my wife and I face high prescription drug prices and the skyrocketing cost of medical care. They wouldn't let you fix our broken health care system a decade ago; what makes you think they'll let you fix it when you're elected president?
HRC: *(Extended laugh)* Let me tell you something—you and your wife will have two front-row seats at our inauguration! *(Laughter, applause)* And we all owe you and your generation a debt of thanks, as a veteran, for all you've done for our country. *(Applause)* Do I think the Republicans will try to kill our American Health Choices Plan? Not if they care about the health of the Republican party! *(Applause)*

Deep-voiced female: Senator Clinton, I'm a transgendered American public-sector professional in transition, but I'm not here to talk about my personal issues. In New Hampshire, we believe in telling the truth, and our country's reputation for honesty and straight talk around the world has taken a beating since January 2001. How would you, as president, give America back its good name?
HRC: You know, you'd be amazed at the number of transgendered people I meet, here in New Hampshire and across the country, in Iowa and elsewhere, who are frankly appalled

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